

FIFTY YEARS OF A LONDONER'S LIFE

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LONDONER'S LIFE

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H. G. HIBBERT
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FIFTY YEARS OF A LONDONER'S LIFE

BY

H. G. HIBBERT

WITH A PREFACE BY

T. P. O'CONNOR



WITH EIGHTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

IF this book and its author make the same appeal to the public as they do to me, then this certainly will be one of the books of the year. As to the author, I have known him for nearly a quarter of a century; he was once my colleague, and a more energetic, competent, trained journalist I have never met, nor a more loyal and steadfast friend. His book is an epitome of the side of journalistic work to which he has devoted most of his professional life—though not all, for Mr Hibbert belongs to the same old-fashioned school of journalists as myself, who had to go through the severe mill, and to turn their hands to everything that turned up, from an execution to a grand opera. But the subject that has attracted his attention more than any other is the stage. For many years he spent some hours of every night of the year in some form or other of a theatre or a music hall; I believe he is one of the men who would prefer, if stranded in a small town, going to a penny gaff rather than remain amid the futile gossip of a smoke-room. This passion for the play is due to an inexhaustible interest in the many forms of art which the stage presents, and to an equally inexhaustible interest in the multiform and often thrilling drama that goes on within a play—namely, the men and women behind the scenes. Add to these qualities a passion for accuracy—a memory for names, dates, plays, even an interest in the financial side of dramatic production—and you will

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understand how Mr Hibbert is a walking encyclopædia of everything and of everybody who for close upon forty years have figured before the public. This book, into which he has concentrated thousands of articles contributed to various journals, may well stand as perhaps the most complete and the most trustworthy record of the stage for recent years.

To me, however, the chief interest of the book is its long series of portraits of the favourites of the public, not merely as they appeared before the footlights, but on their other side—what they were as men and women when they doffed the buskin and wiped off the paint. That world behind the scenes owes little as yet to literature, for the romances in which the mummers have appeared, have hitherto been of either of two classes—those which professed to paint the sordid side and those which have depicted the people of the stage in the alluring colours of the matinee girl. Mr Hibbert is too sane and too conscientious a writer to describe the men and women of the stage, most of whom he has known personally, from the one angle or the other. They live in his pages, not in lurid colours, but just as they are—men and women—living for the most part the commonplace and regular lives of the typical British family man or woman, with their own corroding cares and devastating sorrows in the midst of their absorbing work ; weeping behind the scenes when they have to smile to the public ; spending, in hours of exhausting labour, the time that the rash public imagines to be devoted to mere pleasure-seeking ; with more ups and downs—largely owing to the precariousness of employment, which is the curse of the actor's or actress's life—than those of the average man of the other professions ; and often rising to dazzling heights of popularity and wealth to descend, owing

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to change of taste, or to loss of health, to the abysses of poverty and premature death.

There are chapters in this book, accordingly, which it is impossible to read without a quickening of the breath, without encountering many of the most tragic ironies of life—little and big. All of the chief figures are known to men of my generation; most of them even to this generation. And as I read in these fascinating pages their real lives, learn their real selves, there comes to me the always saddening thought about the stage performer—that these beings of light and joy, who have made so many of our hours pass in tense and fine emotion or in healthy laughter, or amid the rapture that comes from fine elocution or melodious singing, have had in their own lives so little of the happiness they gave to others. How, often, they have vanished, forgotten and neglected, with such poor return for all the past hours of happiness, the imperishable memories, they have left to their fellow-beings.

Some of the portraits are very striking. I refer the reader particularly to the life story of Jenny Hill—"the Vital Spark," as she was called—whose dash to the stage used to set so many hearts beating with expectation of really hilarious enjoyment. There is a little scene with George Leybourne—who once set all the town roaring—in his closing days of illness, which is as dramatic as any scene the pen of a dramatist has painted of poignant pitifulness. I might go on referring to page after page of this kind, but as most pages have some such fascination for me, I might well make my preface as long as the book.

I have dwelt on the dramatic side of the book, for it is its chief feature, but not its only one. Though provincial by

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birth, Mr Hibbert became, like myself, the Cockney more devoted to the great capital than many of those born within its frontiers. London constantly is the background of the whole volume, and many a time there rises that strange old London—now vanished—through which I lived myself in the seventies and the eighties. It is an almost incredible London, though so near, to those of this generation, with its public-houses open almost at all hours, its pot-houses, its poor buildings, its general air of a survival from the hiccoughing and roystering eighteenth century. Mr Hibbert gives a realistic though restrained picture, and the old city of dead things lives again.

Finally, there are pages which describe the life of the old-time journalist, with figures now renowned, such as that of Barrie, once a subordinate in an ancient newspaper office. That school of journalists is now almost as dead a thing as other institutions of those past days ; and again one has a picture of a past in newspaper evolution, which will be interesting to a new generation. I feel, in standing between the reader and those pages, like the Manager that comes before the curtain in *Il Pagliacci* ; like him I must withdraw before I have kept the audience too long waiting. So “Let the curtain rise ” and the moving figures in Mr Hibbert’s dramatic pages make their entrance.

T. P. O’CONNOR.

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CHAPTER I

A LONDON BACKWATER

The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn ; and Gray's Inn Society—
W. S. Gilbert's Early Days—Poets at Play—Nesbit of *The Times*

“**N**OBODY,” said a whimsical creature at a dinner-party the other night, “is born in London.” And he proceeded to prove his statement by challenging the twenty guests. None of them could claim London birth ! The Registrar-General just romances in millions. You can almost certainly confound him any time you range the fellows in the smoke-room at the club.

But, if London have no children, with what tenderness and devotion her stepsons seek to attach her ! For my own part, I have not left her side a clear week in five and twenty years. Some kindly light led an uncouth youngster from the provinces, still dazed by the splendour of his appointment as acting editor of *The Sunday Times*, to domicile in Gray's Inn. As I write, I look through the same attic window, across the greensward where Francis Bacon marches in solitude, eye averted from the outrage of his Mount. Noise of the great world just reaches this quiet backwater—in infinite seduction of alternative !

“Do you know,” said Clement Scott to me a while before his death, “that you are living in the very chambers which W. S. Gilbert occupied as a briefless barrister, where he wrote the *Bab Ballads*, and where he and I and Tom Hood used

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to work on *Fun* ?” Gilbert enlarged the memory, as to a “small and obscure coterie of young dramatists, critics and journalists,” which made his chambers its home. “We called ourselves ‘The Serious Family.’ Tom Hood was the head of the family, and I was the *enfant terrible*. I was absolved from a two-guinea subscription in consideration of supplying a Stilton cheese, a rump-steak pie, a joint of cold beef, whisky and soda and bottled ale, every Saturday night for the term of my natural life. It was the worst bargain, financially, I ever made ; but I never regretted it.” A reference to the club books, which he preserved, drew from Gilbert the mournful remark that he alone survived. His tragical end, it proved, was very near, completing the tale of “Jeff” Prowse, one of the *convives*, indiscriminately a rough writer on sport and of tender verse :

“ Oh ! friends, by whose side I was breasting
The billows that rolled to the shore—
Ye are quietly, quietly resting,
To laugh and to labour no more.”

Gilbert's joyous days in the Inn were busy days too. He was London correspondent and dramatic critic, black-and-white artist, fugitive poet and struggling dramatist. Whether he still lingered in these shades when Pinero came to drive a quill in the office of a neighbouring lawyer, as Dickens once had done, I know not, nor whether the respectable William Black ever came over from No. 2 South Square.

“The Serious Family” seems to correspond roughly with the roll of *Fun*'s contributors, though Gilbert's list is notably richer by Artemus Ward. I lately heard a sordid youngster appreciating a conversation he had heard as “worth sixpence a line” to him. He clearly writes for

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good papers. I recall Edmund Yates's *World* fivepence a line as the high-water mark. But what would not any editor pay for an eavesdropping of "The Serious Family"? I could beat my walls for an echo of its talk, and curse them for their dumbness.

Among a hundred deliberately comic papers, *Fun* was the one real, long-lived rival of *Punch*. Burnand left *Fun* in dudgeon for its historic predecessor because the proprietor, a picture-frame maker and glass merchant, declined *Mokeiana*; but *Punch*, on the other hand, scorned the *Bab Ballads*, and so, Gilbert, undertaking to supply a column of matter and a half-page picture weekly, joined Hood's happy party, which included H. J. Byron, Tom Robertson, Arthur Sketchley (the parson-player who became famous as the creator of "Mrs Brown"), Henry Leigh, the sweet singer of Cockaigne, Charles Godfrey Leland (The Breitmann-Balladist), Jeff Prowse, J. F. Sullivan, with his eccentric art studies of the British workman, Matt Morgan the cartoonist, and Paul Gray, a young Irish painter of rare promise, whose early death from consumption seems to have eclipsed the sun a while in Bohemia of the sixties. Matt Morgan came of theatrical folk, and acted a while ere he became a scene-painter. He bolted to America, it was said, because a wicked cartoon of the Prince of Wales had caused offence. So it had. But Morgan was in a general mess. He lived in America twenty years, and died there.

Is there, I wonder, any part of London so stubbornly resisting the march of time as Holborn does? In 1825 *The Sunday Times* congratulated the authorities on "a step toward civilisation" in the way of a macadamised pavement. One of the last memorials of Dickens went lately,

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indeed—the Bell Inn with its galleried yard ; and Ridlers—swallowed up by new buildings, with its greater neighbour, Furnival's Inn—where the city fathers still gathered of an evening to drink hot brandy from huge tumblers, by the old-fashioned shillingsworth ; varying it with gin punch. When the Mercers' School fitted itself into Barnard's Inn, the watchman, who for years had sung the hours and the weather, was pensioned, but clung to his duties, and would linger through the night in the shelter of the closed gate, uttering his tunes until, with gentle force, they moved him on. But his brother of Ely Place still lingers ; and, in the extremity of that quaint *cul de sac*, which long retained the quality of Sanctuary, the Church of St Ethelreda is devoted to the Ancient Faith, as it was a thousand years ago. On the last Sunday of each April it speeds the procession of devout Catholics on their Walk from Newgate to Tyburn, in the path of a hundred martyrs. When for a few minutes the old houses of Staple Inn form the background of the pilgrims, no city of the world could, surely, set a picture so incongruous against the glare of the nineteenth century.

My early visits to Staple Inn were to join the symposia of a group of young Oxonians, full of the disposition to teach old Fleet Street a new journalism. They would end a wild night by sallying forth from the chambers wherein tradition says Johnson wrote *Rasselas* at fast hand, to provide the cost of his mother's funeral, and, in pyjamas, dance around the plane-tree in the small hours. Maybe the ghost of their great patron was not disturbed unkindly. "What, my lads, are you for a frolic ?" said he, and joined a merry party to Marylebone Gardens, urging them with voice and cudgel

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to destroy the fabric of an illumination which he declared dishonestly below the advertised specification.

For years Nisbet of *The Times* was a resident of Staple Inn. One night he crossed Holborn to borrow a bottle of whisky, for, *mirabile dictu*, he had run out, and, in the terms of the transaction, invited a contingent from Gray's Inn to join a party made up of three poets, drunkenly defining God—one major, one minor, and a “tweenie.” Swinburne is dead ; but the others live, and so they shall not be identified. Nesbit was an amazing creature—a Scotch reporter, grim and monstrous, who had attracted old Macdonald, manager of *The Times*, the “die-hard” of the blundering Parnell campaign. When Mowbray Morris, that dilettante critic of the drama, who invented the immortal phrase “chicken and champagne” retired, Macdonald gave the post to Nisbet, who had never been credited with any special sympathy for the theatre, but who proved a sane and just judge. He ate heartily, drank heartily, turned out literary work of all kinds in prodigious quantities, and snatched intervals of deep slumber anywhere, in the club, or at the theatre. His reading was as voracious as his other appetites. He seemed able to master any subject, and to write on it with authority. The sexual affinities of genius were his obsession. As a “side-line” to *The Times*, and in characteristic indifference to its protest, Nisbet edited one of the first of the halfpenny morning papers, choosing his men with rare insight, and producing a paper of variety and interest. *The Morning* died, as the earlier *Despatch* had died. But it is safe to say that but for *The Morning* there would never have been a *Daily Mail*, which annexed most of its ideas and many of its men.

Nisbet was the second of *The Referee's* “Handbookers.”

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Barring experiments, there have been but four in nearly thirty years. Not in the history of journalism has a feature of such worth and importance maintained the distinction that Henry Sampson, J. F. Nisbet, David Christie Murray and Arnold White have given it.

More sedate is the social life of the Inns to-day. Never more, I suppose, will a porter waking from his cups at three o'clock in the morning bethink himself that he forgot to ring Curfew, and noisily repair his error. Never again shall we see a world-famous comedian ride home in the small hours from the Artists' Ball at Chelsea, astride the horse he had attached to himself on deposit of a sovereign, from the wreck of his hansom. And, certainly, no more will one travel to the City for a penny beside a jolly coachman who drove the first bus over Holborn Viaduct, and who after fifty years—that ended, it seems, but yesterday—was still in the service of the London Omnibus Company, courteously saluted at every encounter by all his comrades.

CHAPTER II

AN OLD STOCK COMPANY

George Dance's First Play—Mrs Kendal's Girlhood—Suicide of Walter Montgomery—Cremorne Gardens

PREDESTINATION to the life of the theatre can alone explain the fact that the first clear memory of one whose youth was spent in puritanical repression should be of a pantomime ; his earliest impression of London, visited at seven, Cremorne Gardens. In each case the agent was a nurse, cruelly admonished, I doubt not, for these surreptitious pleasure-makings ; but now, so gratefully thanked ! In 1865 Nottingham was provided with a New Theatre Royal—become a musty and dingy Theatre Royal last time I saw it. It opened with a pantomime entitled *The House that John and William Built*, in punning reference to the brothers Lambert, wealthy lace manufacturers, who owned it, and loved to haunt its shades. A scene, a song, a comedian, the principal girl, and a Cow with a Crumpled Horn are still vivid in my mind's eye, from my third year.

Many of the great cities of the provinces have supplied material for thick volumes of theatrical history. Perhaps the turn of Nottingham will come. It is rich in story of the Robertsons, through three generations, to Mrs Kendal, whom I remember as the idolised *ingénue* of the stock company. There was an earlier Theatre Royal, which lingered years in degradation, as a music hall, the Alhambra ; then became

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a lace warehouse. At the Alhambra George Dance's first dramatic work was produced. It was a patriotic spectacle ; and, in return for the manuscript, he was to receive a prize-bred bull terrier. Either he got nothing ; or, a mongrel. I know there was bitter trouble. Dance was at that time engaged in local commerce, but diligently writing comic songs. One of his early works was :

“ His lordship winked at the counsel,
Counsel winked at the clerk,
The jury passed the wink around,
And murmured ‘ Here’s a lark.’ ”

Another song has been erroneously attributed to him of late. I note the fact, because it had a melody so bewitching that Queen Victoria, hearing it played by a military band, asked for the words. They proved to be :

“ Come where the booze is cheaper,
Come where the pots hold more,
Come where the boss is a bit of a joss,
Come to the pub next door.”

One might trace the history of the old Theatre Royal, Nottingham, to circuit days. Let a memory of, I think, its last lessee, Mrs John Fawcett Saville, suffice. She was a sweet woman, who sat in the parish church o’ Sundays, her grey silk gown matching the curls carefully disposed about her cheeks. She gave the world two charming actresses, Miss Kate Saville and Miss Eliza Saville. Whenever her plans miscarried she revived “ By Special Request,” for *East Lynne* had not then been written, a play shaped from Cruikshank’s temperance broad-sheet *The Bottle*, and played herself the character of the drunkard’s patient wife. “ The bottle ! What shall I do with the bottle ? ” she cried, hearing the

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unsteady brute approach, and eyeing with apprehension the gin bottle, most carelessly exposed. "Break it, missis! We're blooming well sick of it," was the quick response from the gallery

Wilson Barrett was a member of the stock company here. An old playgoer in the town cherished the photograph of a slim harlequin, mask down—his sceptical friends assured him that "it might be anybody." When I referred it to the then famous actor manager of the Princess's he cried: "That's me!" And, duly authenticated, the picture was restored to its delighted owner. Barrett added a pathetic story of fainting on the stage when first he joined the Nottingham company. A long walk and an empty stomach were responsible. Here is a specimen week's work from his diary: Monday, Brabantio; Tuesday, Cotieres in *Louis XI.*; Wednesday, Stukeley in *The Gamester* (with *Pizarro* as an after-piece); Thursday, Baradas in *Richlieu*; Friday, Edmund in *King Lear* and Sir Charles in *The Little Treasure*; Saturday, Sir Francis in *The Robbers* and Major Galbraith in *Rob Roy*.

An early, probably the first, manager of the New Theatre Royal was Walter Montgomery, who came to London, made what seemed to be a brilliant marriage, and, in a few hours, blew out his brains. The older men still discuss the tragedy in the Green Room Club; but I believe the mystery has never been solved. Not long before Montgomery had written to his old Nottingham manager: "I am the happiest man alive." Of critical playgoers who saw him play Romeo, I have known none admit that he had seen a better. Once, in Nottingham, Montgomery used five Juliets in a week—Miss Madge Robertson, Miss Mattie Reinhardt, Miss Kate Saville, Mrs Scott Siddons and Miss Clara Denville. Miss Denville was a

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lovely creature, a member of an old theatrical family. She was engaged to that Lord Arthur Pelham Clinton who, half-a-century ago, disappeared under a cloud of scandal, and was reported dead, though a clerk with a firm of solicitors in the town told me it was his duty to make a regular remittance to the young nobleman, still living abroad. Clara Denville died ere, hardly, she had emerged from girlhood. Between her and Miss Madge Robertson there was eager rivalry; and Montgomery was understood to take Miss Denville's side. Anyhow when there was a question of a benefit for Miss Robertson the manager forbade it. There was a furious exchange of letters in the press. The Madge Robertson Benefit became a burning question. But neither abuse nor entreaty moved Montgomery; and so a subscription was started, with the result that a respectable sum was raised. With part of the money a souvenir of the occasion was purchased, and the balance was put in a purse. Cash and testimonial were together handed to Miss Robertson by a deputation of friendly citizens, who made speeches that the reporters saved up scrupulously for posterity.

Here is the interesting record of Mrs Kendal's work in Nottingham in 1866: Laura Leeson in *Time Tries All*; Cupid in Burnand's *Ixion*, "looking," as a local journalist said, "very pretty in her pink dress and tights"; Helen in *The Hunchback*; Pauline in *Delicate Ground*; Madeleine in *Belphegor*; Annette (with song, *I have a Silent Sorrow here*) in *The Stranger*; Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*; Ophelia in *Hamlet*; Maria in *George Barnwell*; Mrs Lionel Lynx in *Married Life*; Volante in *The Honeymoon*; Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*; Desdemona in *Othello*; Mary Thornbury in *John Bull*; Ninette in *The Maid and the Magpie*;



CREMORNE GARDENS, 1858
From the "Illustrated London News"

AN OLD STOCK COMPANY

the Singing Witch in *Macbeth* ; Margaret Elmore in *Love's Sacrifice* ; May Edwards in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* ; Julia Mannering in *Guy Mannering* ; Mrs Fitzsmyth in *The Nottingham Ladies' Club* ; Miss Madge Robertson in *the Chair* ; Lady Percy in *Henry IV., Part I.* ; and Kate O'Brien (with songs, *The Beating of my own Heart*, and *Kate Kearney*) in *Perfection*. A fellow-actress with Madge Robertson was a Miss Hathaway, who created something of a sensation by publishing (twenty years later) *The Diary of an Actress* ; or, *The Realities of Stage Life*, a morbid, sordid story of professional life, of which Mrs Kendal accepted the dedication. Madge Robertson's successor in local esteem was Lottie Venne.

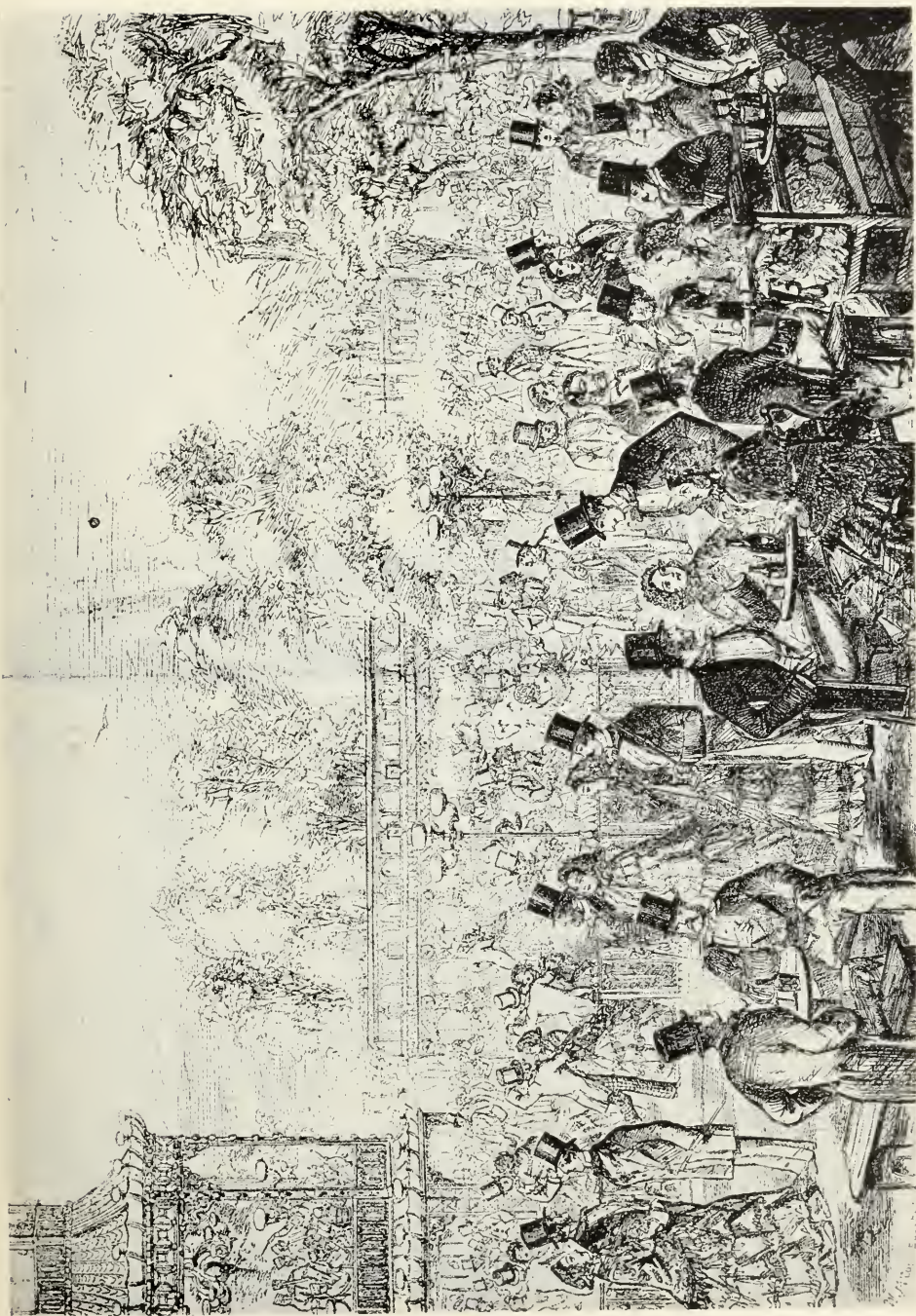
A later lessee of the New Theatre Royal, Nottingham, was Lady Don, a vivacious actress, whose husband, a seven-foot soldier, adopted the profession of the stage, being, I imagine, the first person of title to use his aristocratic style as an actor. The pair came to bankruptcy. On the occasion of a farewell benefit somewhere in the west of England, Sir William Don, from the stage, delivered a passionate exhortation to young men to avoid the fast life which had brought him to ruin. Almost my last memory of the Nottingham stage was that, visiting the town in the eighties as the engaging hero of *The Lights of London*, Mr Leonard Boyne married the local beauty, Miss Mary Everington. Their son distinguished himself lately in action in the European War.

Cremorne was the last of the "tea-gardens" which for centuries played so important a part in the popular entertainment of London. Its history just overlaps that of Vauxhall, finally dispersed in 1859, after years of decay and tawdriness. But Vauxhall had a splendid history, extending over two

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centuries. Cremorne Gardens were destined to endure no more than thirty years. There is some uncertainty as to the exact date of the closure. In the *Era Almanack*, for years, appeared the statement, opposite 4th October : " The Licence of Cremorne lapsed for ever, 1877 " ; and this has been accepted as the date of the closure, though it is not. John Hollingshead had the impression that after the licence lapsed the gardens were kept open in a casual way, and that it would be hard to say when the gates were definitely locked. Not long since I tried to beat the bounds of the Cremorne for the edification of an American visitor. The once picturesque and beautiful estate of twelve acres is covered by uninteresting streets. There remains the Cremorne Tavern, once a kind of lodge to the gardens, but it is bare of relics, nor had the Hebe of the bar the least knowledge of her heritage. The expansion of Chelsea Farm began early in the eighteenth century. It came into the possession of Earl Cremorne in 1803 and took his name. In the forties it was an unsuccessful Stadium.

In 1845 " Baron " Nicholson, better known in connection with an obscene kind of song-and-supper room entertainment called *Judge and Jury*, acquired Cremorne, and reconstructed it on the lines familiar to-day at Earl's Court and the White City. There were theatres and ball-rooms and circuses and dancing platforms and bandstands. But the natural beauties of Cremorne were greater than those of its successors, and the Thames completed them—its steamer service bringing a contingent of patronage too. Money troubles caused Nicholson to associate with him Mr T. B. Simpson of the Albion, a famous theatrical tavern near Drury Lane Theatre. At the neighbouring Harp, Sheridan " took a glass of wine by his own fireside " while Drury Lane burned. At the Albion,



CREMORNE GARDENS, 1858
From the "Illustrated Times"

AN OLD STOCK COMPANY

lessees of Drury Lane remained faithful to the old London coffee-house tradition till Harris's day.

For a long time a charming comedy was enacted weekly at the Albion. Harris never lost the opportunity of employing an old-time actor fallen upon evil days, though it often meant for him a troublesome encounter with the veteran's dignity. A decrepit celebrity, to whom he paid four pounds a week, would rather starve than present himself at the treasury without a sovereign which he would tender to the paymaster in addition to his "packet" with the remark: "H'm! Ha! Can you oblige me with a five-pound note? I want to send it away." A few minutes later, before the assembly at the Albion, it would be "H'm! Ha! A little of the wine of Scotland, dearie, and" (after a rustling in his waistcoat pocket) "I'm afraid I shall have to trouble you for change." And so a pleasant fiction that he was still paid in bank-notes was maintained.

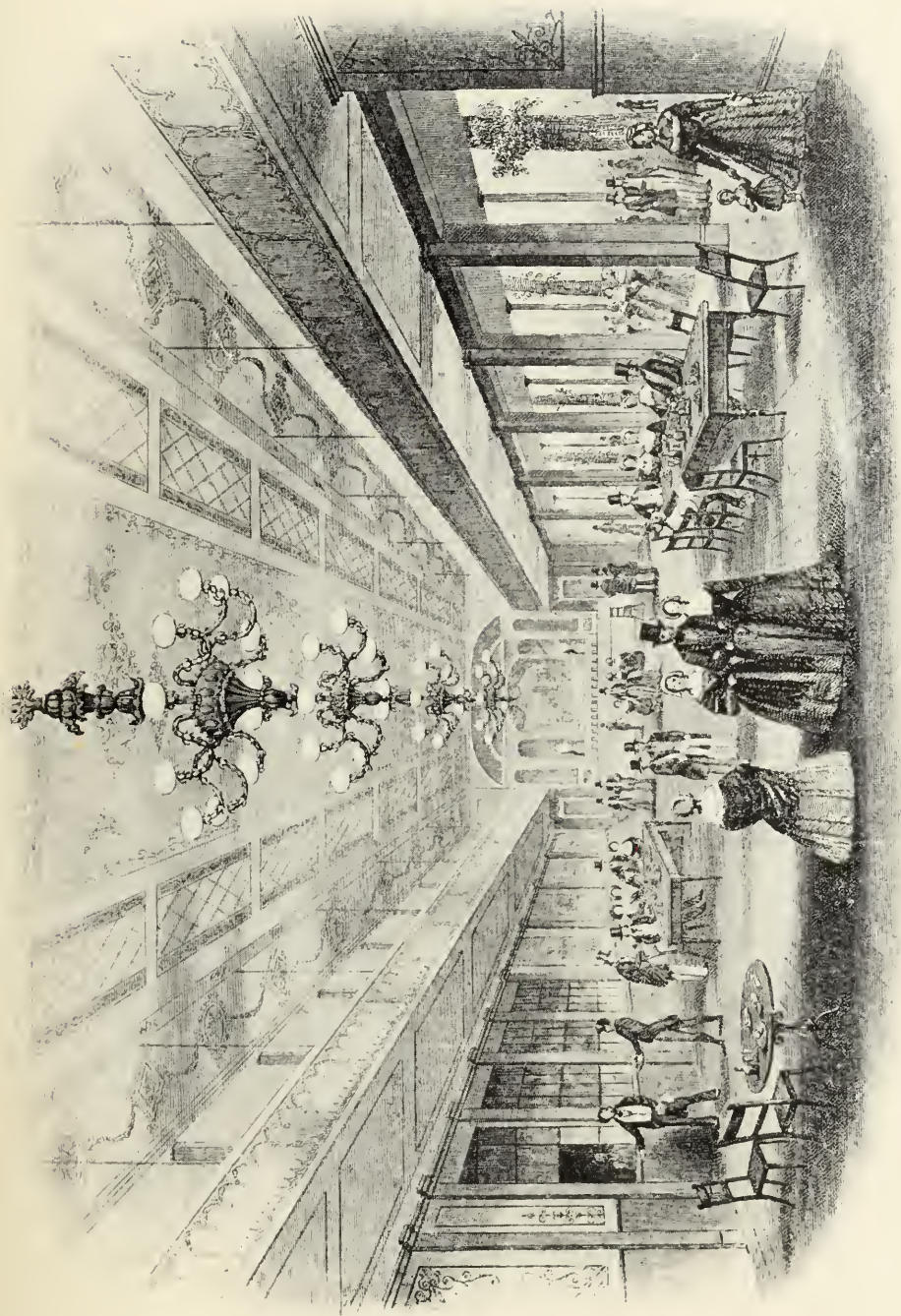
James Albery, the writer of one comedy that was nearly a classic, *Two Roses*, was an alumnus of the Albion; Albery, who wrote his epitaph, invariably misquoted:

"He revelled 'neath the moon,
He slumbered 'neath the sun,
He lived a life of going to do
And died, with nothing done."

Pettitt told with great gusto the story that he and Paul Meritt were discussing, in one of the Albion "pews," the details of a melodrama—in particular, planning a robbery with murder, when a horrified countryman in the next compartment yelled for the police! It reads well, but my old friend had the mischievous habit of inventing these yarns for receptive interviewers.

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In time Nicholson retired from Cremorne with a grievance, and Simpson remained, to make, as he admitted, a hundred thousand pounds. In 1861 Cremorne Gardens were acquired by E. T. Smith, one of the last *entrepreneurs* of Vauxhall—lessee and manager of almost every theatre, opera-house, music hall, circus and tea-garden in London in his day; ex-police constable, auctioneer, publican, money-lender, newspaper proprietor and parliamentary candidate. He promoted at Cremorne a ludicrous reproduction of the Eglinton Tournament. I recall a Man Fly, who thrilled me by walking across the lofty ceiling, head downwards; and a flying machine, which was a huge oiled silk envelope of a man. It was inflated, and carried him a few feet from the ground from end to end of the great ballroom. A female Blondin crossed the river on a tight rope. A Fête of the Four Elements associated the Fire King and the Man Fish, ingeniously eking out the quartet with a company of ground tumblers and a troupe of aerial gymnasts! A painful sensation was caused in 1874 when De Groof, a Belgian, attempting a parachute descent, fell and was killed. There was always a good ballet at Cremorne, mostly provided by the Lauri family; and employing Kate Vaughan and her sister, Susie, as members of the Vaughan troupe, which did a much admired Black Dance. But the night scenes grew more and more disreputable. King's Road was rendered well nigh uninhabitable by the stream of hansoms bearing *noceurs* and naughty dames from east to west, and back. Smith retired in 1869. John Baum was his successor. In 1877, on whatever date, decency forbade Cremorne. And London was left ten years without alfresco entertainment till the Health Exhibition took up the tale.



THE BANQUETING HALL, CREMORNE GARDENS

CHAPTER III

IN A PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPER OFFICE

The Beginnings of J. M. Barrie—Stories of Dean Hole—Bendigo the Prize-fighter—Bernal Osborne's Wit

THERE was a diffident knocking at the door of *The Nottingham Daily Journal* on a Sunday night. On the dark landing, a-top of a broken staircase, stood a small delicate youth unmistakably from Scotland.

"My name is Barrie. I am the new leader writer!"

He proceeded to explain that he was "a-awfully tired," after the long journey from Edinburgh. He had taken the precaution of writing, in the train, a leading article which he hoped would satisfy the occasion. And he would like to go home to bed. The leading article was written in pencil, on both sides of the two fly-leaves, yellow glazed, of a pocket edition of Horace. The writing was minute and regular and most legible—apparently. Actually, it was the tonic record of a Scottish drawl, softly extended, and sweetly unintelligible. Barrie's association with "the oldest provincial daily paper," thus begun, extended over two years, and was terminated, it may be, because of the ultra-fantastic quality of the contributions of "The Little Minister"; it may be because he asked for an increase of salary at a moment when dubiety as to the commercial worth (in Nottingham), and saneness, of his humour had become acute.

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Barrie first asked three pounds a week in response to an advertisement. "H'm, ye-es," said the senior proprietor. "We pay monthly. That will be twelve pounds a month." Barrie, I got to know, was a spendthrift in generosity of certain kinds. But the ingenious reduction of three pounds per week to two pounds seventeen and fourpence first perplexed and then eternally angered him.

An interval of two weeks divided our installation. I was twenty ; and, conscious that I had lied a little about my age, I modestly asked two pounds per week, getting, by the same process of reckoning, a fraction less than thirty-seven shillings ! The proprietors were two estimable and kindly men, very rich, who had inherited the paper from their father, an eccentric solicitor of great account in midland counties politics in the fifties. They grimly watched the fine old paper die.

My instructions were to take up my duties at four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon. The key of the vast building, containing thousands of pounds worth of machinery, was left for me under the front door mat. In undisturbed solitude I got together the basis of the next day's paper from contributed manuscript and predatory snipping, on which material the composing staff set to work at half-past eight, for the rule was that the mechanical workers must have an opportunity to attend evening church. Literary souls had to arrange salvation at a morning service—or, not. At a quarter past eight the foreman printer, immortalised, as all the details of the establishment were, in Barrie's first published novel, *When a Man's single*, entered the room.

"Good-evening," he said. "I suppose you're the new sub-editor. I'm the foreman printer. I might say I run this

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place. I've been here, man and boy, for thirty-nine years, and I've seen thirty-seven young fellows in your chair. I hope we shall get on."

It was all true. He spoke of the senior proprietor as "W." and the junior proprietor as "Him." He had two names for "copy." There was "noos," to which he attached importance according to its local application. To be sure he could cite Macaulay as a precedent. And there was mere literary matter, which he called "tripe."

Barrie's work, acutely literary, was always in peril; and he suffered horribly. Our autocrat had a soft spot, but Barrie refused to negotiate it. For myself, I once procured the insertion of an historic speech on Protection by Henry Chaplin by marking it the introduction to Mansfield Flower Show. So it became "preference copy."

Barrie's contract, for, "say, twelve pounds a month," was to supply two columns of literary matter per day. One was to consist of a leading article, as to which general, but never particular, instructions were given, in an eight-page letter from the senior proprietor. Barrie often remarked that he had managed to decipher everything but the religion of the worthy man. One day he told me he had arrived at a conclusion on the point. A splendidly generous act, perpetrated in secrecy, was his key to the cipher.

We had another important contributor—a man of a good family, become garrulous on sport, about which he wrote a weekly article, for seven and sixpence, *sacro sanct*, at whatever length it came in. Dean Hole, then Vicar (and Lord of the Manor) of Caunton, had delivered a delightful speech—he used to write his addresses and carry them in his pocket.

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Whether or not he learned them I know not, but manuscript and oration compared with verbal exactitude. He lent me this speech, for liberal quotation in *The Journal*. But the sporting article came in, as the deluge. I penned an apologetic note to Dean (then simply Canon) Hole, explaining that if he found his speech curtailed he would at any rate find "Diophantus's latest notes on the St Leger" available. He replied :

"DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—

Delightful Diophantus !

Desolate—REYNOLDS HOLE ! "

As a preacher, as a great Anglican, as a gardener, as a litterateur, as a wit, Dean Hole is well known. A schoolfellow of mine was his curate and once entered the cottage of a bed-ridden dame. A broad, black-coated back obscured the fireplace. "Hullo, Tom !" said the vicar, looking over his shoulder. "Come to read old Betty a chapter ? Wait till I've made this linseed poultice."

Diligent research into the files of *The Nottingham Journal* would probably disclose, just as the columns of its prosperous competitor, *The Nottingham Guardian*, enclose, in its "Poet's Corner," some of the gems of Mortimer Collins, many characteristic sayings of that corrosive wit, Bernal Osborne, who contested the borough from time to time. "I stand before you," he said to the soon fascinated electors, "the only candidate without a handle to his name." His competitors were Viscount Amberley and a Mr Handel Cosham. Those were the days of the hustings, and I well remember being taken as a child to inspect the debris in the great marketplace—eggs, stones, what not, were hurled at the candidates

IN A PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPER OFFICE

as they appeared on the temporary platform to return thanks for the great or little support they had received.

In that same great market-place I recall the prize-fighter, William Thompson or "Bendigo." He had been converted by a local evangelistic pork butcher, "Jemmy" Dupe, and he sat, a gaunt grey old man wearing a broad-cloth suit, but his colours of "bird's-eye" blue, beside a barrow, on which were displayed his championship belts and the Bibles that he sold. Ever and anon he would spring to his feet and sing :

" Ho ! The Devil had me once
But he let me go !
Yes he let me go !
Bendigo ! "

But we talked of journalism. One of my early duties was to record a concert given by local scholars who had distinguished themselves at the Royal Academy of Music. They brought a star—Miss Marie Etherington, who is now Miss Marie Tempest.

Barrie wrote for *The Nottingham Journal* five leaders a week, a weekly column of gossip signed "Hippomenes"—many of these essays were reprinted in *My Lady Nicotine*, having in their early state been infinitely beyond the average reader of *The Journal*—and book reviews, carefully measured with a tape, to make up the tale of twelve columns per week. The Saturday "leader" was written for years by a local accountant of immense erudition, amazing views, and a literary style founded on Cobbett. His lucubration always filled two columns. I remember an article that began : "God moves ('tis said) in a mysterious way. But the Nottingham waterworks company . . ." Barrie used to open the Saturday paper and fling it from him in a rage.

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Throughout his life in Nottingham he made no friends, was morbidly unhappy, and yet cherished the belief that he had a sacred trust in the editorial columns of *The Journal*. He had an immense sense of his importance. It was not vanity—just a natural contempt for all his surroundings and a natural consciousness of his superiority. There was a corresponding constraint towards him on the part of the local newspaper men. And yet there were such good fellows among them !

They had a curious little club, meeting in a tavern, called “The Kettle.” I sought it out a while ago, but it had gone. Barrie went once or twice, but was frankly disgusted. One of its members is a well-known barrister now. Another is headmaster of a public school. Another is reader of fiction for a firm outpouring penny novelettes. Another became, indiscriminately, a fascinating writer about Parliament, and an exigent judge of bull-dogs. Dear, eccentric Dick Mann, with whom I have shared my schoolboy hundred lines, a lodging-house bed and a scarce sovereign ! Fleet Street seemed to change when you went !

Barrie's first play was written in Nottingham, on approval, for Minnie Palmer. It “discovered” her, sitting on a mantelpiece. It was called, I think, *Polly's Dilemma*, and it was printed as a detail of the Christmas issue of *The Nottingham Journal*, so that we might borrow the type, economically make it into a booklet, and so try to sell the play. His first fiction was published in *Bow Bells*—twenty thousand words of succulent sentiment, for which he got three guineas. He bought some desired print, *The Greek Slave*, I think, with the money, and pasted the story on the back as indicating its *fons et origo*.

IN A PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPER OFFICE

His lonely rooms in a suburban terrace backed on to the garden of my home. My sweet mother, in her expansive kindness, would go and signal to him that tea was a-going—midland counties tea, of many attributes. There was once an impossible interval and he made amends for his absence with a still treasured copy of *David Elginbrod*, inscribed “To the Face at the Window. He cometh not, she said.” Dear soul! She specialised on forlorn journalists. There is a millionaire newspaper man of to-day to whom she had no more to say than: “You poor, neglected thing! Just turn out all your socks.” And mended them.

Barrie of those days fancied himself as an actor. He would on the slightest provocation give an imitation of Irving as Romeo and Modjeska as Juliet. In his playlet, *Rosalind*, I think I recognise an encounter with a well-known actress of that day, Marie de Grey, who once startled the supper-room of a restaurant by impulsively reciting the epilogue to *As You Like It*. His rooms were curiously devoid of books. There was a Horace—that very Horace of the yellow, leader-written fly-leaves—and there was Bartlett’s *Familiar Quotations*. If ever he were tempted to use a quotation he turned to Bartlett, and if it were among the Familiar, out it went.

He was the most shy, the most painfully sensitive creature, with an exquisite delicacy in regard to women. He drank nothing. And he used to assure me that after a most conscientious trial he found smoking detestable. Walking was a joy to him. I suppose we must have covered hundreds of miles of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire together. He was years ahead of me in setting that first, rapturous, proprietorial foot on the pavement of

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Fleet Street in that proud ability to say, *Civis Romanus sum*.

For the proprietors of *The Nottingham Journal* economised on him, and bought their editorial opinions from an agency at three shillings and sixpence a column all in type complete. Two years later they economised on me.

CHAPTER IV

OF CRITICS, OLD AND NEW

Clement Scott's Influence—Lyceum First Nights—Irving and Wilson Barrett—The Fight of *La Dame aux Camélias*

WHEN Rejane last visited London its dramatic critics conferred upon her their new, supererogatory distinction of a dinner. The most interesting feature of the occasion was the facility with which three of their number delivered speeches in French—understood, I believe, by most of their colleagues ! It is pretty safe to say that when, after much negotiation on the part of John Hollingshead, the Comédie Française first visited London at the Gaiety in 1879, no then important writer about the drama could have performed such a feat. One or two had a literary acquaintance with the French drama. But even the adaptations from the French, by critics and others, which for a long time pervaded the English stage, were done from literal translations first made by a hack.

Director Jules Claretie of the Comédie Française was terrified by the prospect of English criticism ; and insisted on the importation of Francisque Sarcey as a detail of his contract—the one heavy expense which Hollingshead, a most liberal manager, deeply and for ever resented. Apropos : The Comédie Française also brought on the scene Arthur Shirley, to become a most prolific writer of melodrama,

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mostly suggested by French plays. Shirley was a North London rate collector, with a curiously intimate and facile knowledge of the French stage, and he was engaged as secretary to the visitors. One or two English newspaper proprietors sought the aid, in dealing with the French season, of men who speak French and write English. Such employment brought into London journalism two of the most distinguished dramatic critics of to-day !

What Clement Scott loved to call the "critical bench" of twenty-five years ago presents a strange contrast to that of to-day. It is discreet to make the comparison general. Bench was Scott's word ; but he was the least judicial of critics—a passionate advocate, always ; sometimes in the attitude of prosecution, more often in the attitude of defence. The best criticism of to-day—most of the criticism of to-day—is infinitely superior to that of yesterday, in its desire to be judicial and in its effort toward literary distinction—one is particular to exclude the steadily degrading personal paragraph, and the "light, bright stuff," in substitution for a critical review, poured into some Fleet Street dailies to meet the exigencies of ever earlier publication, ere the performance in the theatre has well begun.

But if the critic of to-day is an improvement on the critic of yesterday—what of the day before ? Until Clement Scott came into his own, criticism was, as it had been for years, say, from the disappearance of John Forster and George Henry Lewes, perfunctory, uninteresting, often inspired by strong prejudice, and the venal interest of playwriting or adaptation. I am not speaking, of course, from personal knowledge—from that acquired by casual research through old files, and from the report of old-time managers. To a man, the

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Early Victorian critic was a hawker of plays—eking out one ill-paid employment by another. E. L. Blanchard poured forth his encyclopædic knowledge for less money per thousand words than a badly sweated typist would charge for copying to-day. Maddison Morton, the Lope de Vega of Adelphi farce, was content with a five-pound note. I believe that Henry Neville paid at the rate of fifty pounds an act for *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, which might mean fifty thousand pounds to a lucky author of to-day. It was, of course, an adaptation, made without “by your leave,” or “thank you,” or any form of acknowledgment, according to the custom of that day, when managers would subject a manuscript to detective inquiry, so that if it proved to be an adaptation they had a ready resort from an exorbitant “author,” to some cheaper translator.

Sidney Grundy, who had been a dramatic critic, mostly hated the fraternity, and to his friends made no secret of the originals of the two scamps he pilloried in *An Old Jew*. This savagery, and its unfortunate title, ruined a play of much merit. Tom Robertson, an earlier caricaturist of the craft, was kinder. Still, Oxenford of *The Times* was rendered furious by the Owls Roost scene, in *Society*. Sitting in the Arundel Club, a delightful symposium with a sub-Savage flavour, he declared that “Tom had no right so to disgrace his pals, depicting them with a clay pipe in one hand, and a glass of gin and water in the other.” A shout of laughter brought to the notice of the old man that in one hand he held a clay pipe, in the other a glass of gin and water. He angrily threw them into the hearth, and left the club.

Scott was certainly the first writer in a London daily

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paper who appealed, on behalf of the theatre, to the popular imagination. He brought into use a new phrase, long, now, in disuse. The play-going public asked eagerly, as it has never asked apropos any other critic, not : "What does *The Telegraph* say ?" but : "What has Scott to say ?" though his work for the most part was anonymous. With his vivid column on the morrow, as compared with a dull paragraph on the ensuing Saturday, which had been the custom, a new interest in the theatre arose ; and the "first night" became a function. Celebrities grew common, eager to witness the actual production of a play, whereas the habit of the "best people" had been to wait a while.

Managers were alert to the importance of this fact. Bram Stoker, Irving's indefatigable lieutenant, marshalled his distinguished guests ; and Willie Wilde formulated a paragraph for *The World*, which became the type for society journalism : "Baroness Burdett Coutts was in her box with Mr Ashmead Bartlett in attendance ; Mr Chamberlain, who was accompanied by his pretty young wife, discoursed of orchids to Archdeacon Sinclair ; Mr Theodore Watts brought Mr Swinburne ; Miss Braddon outlined her new novel to Sir Edward Lawson ; Dr Morell Mackenzie congratulated Sir Edward Clarke on his speech in the Penge mystery trial," and so on. After the play there would be an informal party on the stage. A nod and a beck from Bram Stoker was the invitation—naturally, abused in time.

Stoker was a big, shambling fellow, red bearded, carelessly dressed, always in what he called a "ma-artal hurry" ; for the Lyceum, so apparently ecclesiological, was, as a business structure, chaotic. Stoker was a Dublin journalist when Irving appreciated and annexed him. He became the

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actor's faithful and lifelong servant. Afterwards, it proved that he might have made a reputation as a novelist.

At the Princess's Theatre, Wilson Barrett tried a foolish rivalry—celebrities, supper-party, society patron-saint and all. Lady Jeune was the good fellow's social sponsor—for he was a good fellow, with all his weaknesses. Nothing could emphasise the difference between the two actor managers so strongly as their dress did. Irving's huge silk hat, monkish face, iron-grey hair, loose Chesterfield were as subtly distinguished as they were carefully unobtrusive. Barrett liked to march the Row in a velvet coat, a slouch hat and a Quartier Latin tie. So it was, all through! He made an income sufficient even for his extravagances till he produced *Hamlet*, which ruined him. He could not indulge this ambition quietly, and get it over, but started angry scholars on an adventurous controversy—apropos his textual outrages; then finally began to take himself *au sérieux* as a Shakespearean commentator.

Barrett was a genius all the same. How much his earlier authors learned from him we shall never know—nothing, according to their angry protests, when he preferred a modest claim. But years later he produced valuable evidence—*The Sign of the Cross*, to wit. He indubitably wrote that great play. I call it great for the reason that it put fifty thousand pounds into the pocket of the creditors who had driven him from London; and another fifty thousand pounds into his own. Archer described it as “a combination of the penny dreadful with the Sunday-school picture-book . . . a salvationist pantomime, lacking a harlequinade.” Hard luck, that after his noble struggle and eventual triumph he lived so short a time to enjoy his aftermath. I am afraid the

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typical appeal of *The Sign of the Cross*—pace its clerical recommendation, and even Gladstone's—was to the old lady who witnessed Miss Haidee Wright's torture scene many times, and would come panting up the stairs to the ticket-taker with the anxious query: "Has she shrieked yet, mister?"

Barrett had his Fidus Achates too—an amazing adventurer known as Henry or Daddy Herman, who had been half blinded as a Confederate soldier in the American War, and who used to play practical jokes with his glass eye. He held it out to an extortionate cabman once, who, believing he had maimed his man, drove away full speed. Herman's real name was not Darco, as it is generally given. He had yet an earlier. His mind teemed with play plots and stories. He was an admirable *metteur en scène*, and an ardent lover of Dickens. He quarrelled with most of his collaborators, though he was as generous as he was hot tempered. He squandered thousands; and died poor. For fuller particulars, see Christie Murray's novel, *Despair's Last Journey*.

Homeward, to my text, which was dramatic criticism; and, in conclusion: Scott's method was to abandon himself to a passion of praise, or invective. He was often unjust—as in his attack, shortly after he had become a Catholic, on Malcolm Salaman's fine play, *A Modern Eve*, which succumbed—always extravagant, and always interesting. He claimed to be a super-missionary of the stage; and got terribly vain of his power. I have heard actors and managers speak of him with passionate hatred. But I should say he doubled the importance of the theatre as a commercial enterprise, for no writer, before or since, has so stimulated the public interest.

OF CRITICS, OLD AND NEW

One of Scott's earliest exploits in journalism was to procure the imprisonment, for libel, of James Mortimer, the founder of *The London Figaro*—prototype of all the smart penny papers of to-day, and training school of a second famous critic, William Archer. Its stand-by was a very characteristic humorist, known as O.P.Q. Philander Smith, actually Aglen A. Dowty, a good-looking civil servant, whose articles were wont to be illustrated by a monstrous caricature of the writer.

Scott was eager to avow the offending article. Mortimer sternly refused to permit this, and chivalrously took his punishment, as Edmund Yates did, later, in a less worthy cause. Mortimer was a grim old man, savage in speech, with a heart of gold. His unsuccessful plays numbered hundreds. He was one of the finest chess-players of his day, and an inveterate gambler at Monte Carlo. For many years he was the confidential secretary of Napoleon III.; afterwards, the trusted friend of the Empress Eugenie. He was shockingly hard up in his old age; but I can still hear the torrent of blasphemy he let loose when he was asked to write a *vie intime* of his beloved patrons.

It is Mortimer's distinction to have secured the sanction of the Lord Chamberlain for a play pretty faithfully translated from *La Dame aux Camélias*—namely, *Heartsease*—in which first Helen Barry, then the Polish actress Modjeska appeared. There had been many previous attempts, but the censor even declined one which landed Margaret in the haven of respectable matrimony. What Patti had been allowed to sing in *Traviata*, and what Bernhardt had been allowed to say in French on the intervention of the Prince of Wales (Edward VII.), Mortimer was tardily allowed to do into English, on

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the condition that he did not exploit his play as an adaptation from Dumas'. Hence, *Heartsease*.

Contemporaries of Scott were Joseph Knight, an immense, big-bearded barrister, who might have sat for a statue of Rabelais ; and Moy Thomas, a counterfeit presentment of Lord Wolseley. Moy Thomas had an entertaining habit of conveying his opinions, often in crude language, to his friend, sometimes across six rows of stalls. They were both men of great learning, and that gave their critical work its particular value. Thomas was one of the old guard of *The Daily News* ; also a magazine writer. Knight wrote for *The Globe*, *The Daily Graphic* and *The Athenæum* ; also edited *Notes and Queries*. He accumulated many thousand books about the stage, and seldom left the Garrick Club till morning ; both habits giving his daughter and devoted companion, Mrs Ian Robertson, grave concern.

I own to a deep affection for the memory of one old Bohemian, who had seen and enjoyed much life, and who expressed commonsensical views in strong language. He detested the new journalism, as I am sure the new journalist would despise him. He would step into the Savage on his way from the theatre to the office ; and, if someone tempted him to reminiscences of the prize-ring, unhappy play—it was forgotten ! But a kind friend would quietly slip up to Fleet Street and repair the default, by writing his notice.

Picture him, then, marching into the Gaiety bar, one morning, emptying a tumbler of brandy-and-soda, then scanning his daily paper. “ There, my brave boy,” he cried to his neighbour. “ That is what you call journalism, of the good old school. Half-a-column of limpid English. God knows when, or where, or how I wrote it. I don't !

OF CRITICS, OLD AND NEW

When you can do that——” But the other fled, lest the vainglory of the bibulous veteran should tempt an outcry that the “brave boy” in good-fellowship and secrecy had done that very thing! A conceited youngster appealed to him at the first performance of *The Best Man* at Toole’s. “I say, Mr ——! Billington’s hunting-breeches are all *wrong*.” “Each man to his knowledge, my lad,” said the old Fleet Streeter. “The pawnbroking’s *rotten*.”

These critics, and their colleagues of old time, were not the “guests of the theatre,” to use Sir Herbert Tree’s courtly phrase, but peremptory inspectors. Every newspaper of standing had a printed form, or “order,” which its editor would sign, demanding seats for the bearer—the bearer being possibly the genuine critic; or, any other body, from the signatory’s mother-in-law to the lady who did his washing—and friend. When I joined the staff of *The Sunday Times* in 1890 there was a large stock of these orders still in hand. *The Era* used them still a few years ago.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF THE MUSIC HALL

From Pot-house to Palace—Early Comic Songs—"Champagne Charley"—Charles Dickens at the Music Halls

IF the old-time critic of the theatre were of a perfunctory habit, the music hall was nearly ignored in the newspapers of the sixties and seventies—now and then a trivial paragraph, in an obscure niche; now and then a trumpery "descriptive" article, lurid and uninformatory. In the eighties, whenever theatrical topics were few, the critic with space to fill would betake himself to a variety house, and write of it in a condescending way, professing surprise at the cleverness and interest of the entertainment he found there—though he had probably been a regular attendant. Finally, there was an invasion of the music hall by young poets, who wrote of it in foolish rhapsody. Somebody coined the delectable phrase, "From pot-house to palace," which is not indeed an unfair summary. And Charles Morton was styled the "Father of the Music Hall." He was hardly that; nor was the Canterbury the exact origin of the variety theatre. The Canterbury was indeed the oldest music hall, of its distinction, with an uninterrupted history. But there were halls of importance in existence when Morton, who developed from a waiter into a sporting publican, took the Canterbury Arms. There were, notably, the not distant Winchester, and the Rotunda, near

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Blackfriars Bridge, now the Arena of prize-fights. The first song-and-supper room added to the Canterbury Arms, which had Vauxhall Gardens for a still active neighbour, was a very modest affair. The vast variety theatre which we know is a third, or even a fourth, rebuilding of the original structure. Morton, at the outset, probably attached more importance to the betting list displayed in his bar—said to be the last ; though other “ list men,” for instance “ Bob ” Osborne, who died a while ago, in extreme old age continued in the business, pinning their lists to the trees in Hyde Park, and repudiating its legal definition as a “ place.”

I would not identify the Canterbury as the first music hall—nor the others. Rather, I would trace its origin to Bartholomew Fair, as the earliest minister of a form of entertainment less conventional than that of the theatre. The Victorian song-and-supper room—the Coal Hole, and the Cider Cellars—provided a vessel, into which the fairs, the tea-gardens, the circuses, the saloon theatres each flung an ingredient. And so you get the modern music hall, which was never in a state of evolution so active as, at this moment, it is. In ten years it will develop something differing completely from what it is to-day—differing more than the music hall of to-day differs from its predecessors.

Too much stress is laid apologetically on the glee-singing that certainly formed an important part of the Canterbury programmes, and on the fact that half-a-dozen vocalists standing in a row in preposterous evening dress gave the first performance in London of Gounod's *Faust*—this by way of reproach to the less exalted taste of the music hall patron of to-day. In truth, the Canterbury Music Hall owed its success not to “ high class ” music but, as all music halls have

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done in the meanwhile, to a comic singer or “vocal comedian” seduced from the song-and-supper rooms at the West End—Sam Cowell, an immigrant from America ; and, at the outset, a singer in Grand Opera. Cowell, to judge from his pictures, dressed his parts carefully. His favourite medium was a doggerel narrative running to many verses, such as *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* :

“ A hero's life I'll sing ; his story shall my pen mark.
He was not the King, but Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.
His mammy she was young—the Crown she'd set her eyes on,
Her husband stopped her tongue ; she stopped his ears with pizon.”

Here is his version of *Faust* :

“ Once upon a time in Gottingen,
A fine old German city,
A student lived who, o'er his books,
Each day and night would sit he.
His mind and mem'ry were well stored
With every kind of knowledge ;
In fact, so long o'er books he pored,
He was a walking college:
For forty years he struggled hard
With spirits good and evil.
He tried in vain to raise the wind—
At last he raised the devil.”

Take again Oliver Twist :

“ Now, gals and boys, I 'opes you're vell.
Yes ! thankee, I'm the same.
Of course you don't know me at all—
The Dodger is my name:
You've read my adventures written by Boz.
Says I, Who the Dickens is he?
About a parish 'prentice lad
Who was all of a twist—like me.”

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Such quaint ditties as *The Rat-catcher's Daughter* and *Villikins and his Dinah*, ill-starred lovers who "vos a-buried in von grave," were also favourites of Cowell's. The latter gets its vogue from the "great little" Robson, and was maintained in popularity within modern memory by Toole. Here is a typical song of Sam Cowell's, which every street boy knew by heart in its day :

"As I was a-valking down by the sea-shore,
Vere the vinds and the vaves and the vaters did roar,
With the vinds and the vaves and the vaters all round.
I heard a sweet voice making sorrowful sound,
Singing, Ri-fol-de-riddle-ol-de-ray,
My love's dead—him I adore,
And I never, no never, shall see him no more."

Clement Scott put it on record that Cowell was the "best comic singer he ever heard." Morton was never weary of singing his praises, and paid him eighty pounds a week, an immense sum in those days, when capable comedians would appear at the song-and-supper rooms for the honorarium of three half-crowns per night and two hot drinks. Cowell took great liberties with his audiences. His exit from Evans's was dramatic. "Mr Cowell is late again," cried angry old Paddy Green. "You've made him your god, gentlemen, but, by God! he sha'n't be mine!" Cowell took liberties with his constitution too, and died young.

If the "vocal comedian" were not the product of the Canterbury, but borrowed, none can dispute its claim to that ineffable creature, the "serio-comic singer," for women neither performed at the song-and-supper rooms, nor were admitted to them, till Evans's was on the eve of dissolution.

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The first serio-comic singer was Mrs Caulfield, and here, in jargon I have failed to translate, is the first serio-comic song :

“ Kemo, Kimo ! Where ? Oh, there ! my high, low !
Then in came Dolly singing
Sometimes medley winkum lingum up-cat
Sing song, Dolly, won't you try me, oh ! ”

In time there were acrobats at the Canterbury, and Blondin traversed the hall on his tight rope. And William Lingard gave impersonations of celebrities.

But the prosperity of the Canterbury waned. Morton abandoned it—to be resuscitated by other enterprise, and devoted himself to the Oxford, which, again, he enlarged from an inn, the Boar and Castle. He had a serious rival but a few hundred yards citywards, Weston's Royal Music Hall, also enlarged from a public-house, the Seven Tankards and the Punchbowl, absorbing a chapel in the process. This important characteristic of all the earlier halls—outgrowth from an inn—is not to be overlooked. It meant much in morale. I remember Henri Gros, who did much for the music hall, standing on the pavement of Edgware Road and characteristically shaking his fist at the White Lion, which he declared to be the curse of its offspring, the Metropolitan.

Champagne flowed river-like at Weston's. The earliest proprietor loved to hear it ordered by the case ! From the stage George Leybourne sang :

“ Champagne Charley is my name !
Champagne Charley is my name !
Good for any game at night, my boys !
Good for any game at night, my boys !



GEORGE LEYBOURNE

THE STORY OF THE MUSIC HALL

Champagne Charley is my name !
Champagne Charley is my name !
Good for any game at night, my boys !
Who'll come and join me in a spree ? "

Leybourne was a mechanic from the Midlands. His real name was Joe Saunders. He came to London by way of a holiday, was fascinated by the performances of the already popular Arthur Lloyd, and determined to become a comic singer. His early employment was to sing in eulogy of Tom Sayers, the prize-fighter. The song ran :

" Hit him on the boko !
Dot him on the snitch !
Wot a pretty fighter !
Was there ever sich ! "

Leybourne attracted the notice of the late William Holland, known as the People's Caterer, and was engaged to appear at the Canterbury Music Hall. His salary was twenty-five pounds a week, guaranteed for twelve months. He was provided with a carriage and four horses, quickly burlesqued by another performer with four donkeys, and encouraged to wear a fur coat. He also cultivated the habit of calling for champagne on the slightest provocation, and he died in his forty-second year in poor circumstances. Meanwhile he enjoyed amazing popularity and earned as much as a hundred and twenty pounds a week. *Captain Cuff ; Mouse Traps, a penny ! Who'll buy ? ; Up in a Balloon ; After the Opera is Over, and Riding on a Donkey*, were some of his songs. And the *Rollicking Rams* :

" Button up your waistcoat, button up your shoes.
Have another liquor, and throw away the blues.
Be like me, and good for a spree
From now till day is dawning,

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For I'm a member of the Rollicking Rams,
Come and be a member of the Rollicking Rams:
The only boys to make a noise
From now till day is dawning.
We scorn such drinks as lemonade,
Soda, seltzer, beer.
The liquors of our club I'd tell you,
But I can't, for there's ladies here.

Come along, come along, come along,
For I'm a member of the Rollicking Rams,
Out all night till broad daylight
And never go home till morning.'"

Leybourne's songs were primarily exploited of course in the then disreputable music halls; but they found their way into the Strand and Gaiety burlesques—ostensibly with the idea of satirising their vulgarity and silliness, probably with the object of stealing their usually fascinating music, for no fee was paid. *Captain Crosstree is my Name* in *Black-Ey'd See-usan* is an instance.

Leybourne was tall, handsome, elegant, with an infectious gaiety and charm. George Edwardes once told me that he would find a thousand pounds a week for this Cockney Horace, could he be restored to life and activity, as at his best. An artist of the present day might be cited for illustration—George Lashwood, who has much of Leybourne's sentiment and style.

Another of the pillars of the Old Royal Holborn was Stead, a queer creature who sang *The Perfect Cure* with an extraordinary, intermittent dance. Charles Dickens inserted an article in *Household Words* in eulogy of its performance, and professed to have counted the *ballons* of the dancer to the number of sixteen hundred. Dickens wrote that he "strongly urged the case of the music halls against

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the prosecutions of theatrical managers," and advocated free trade in entertainment.

When Morton opened the Oxford his ambition soared to Sims Reeves for his star. But Reeves somewhat scornfully declined the offer. Charles Santley was more amenable—Santley now full of years and honours. Sims Reeves's old age was deplorable. He was glad of music hall engagements ere yet the great ones of the stage had begun to consider them—first, of course, in missionary zeal; eventually for their considerable emolument. In a few years the first Oxford Music Hall was destroyed by fire, and Morton passed on, to become, at the Philharmonic, the father of Opera Bouffe.

CHAPTER VI

THE LONDON PAVILION

Concerts in a Stable-yard—Dr Kahn's Museum—Early Joint Stock Companies and their Fate—The Oxford and the Tivoli

THERE is no more remarkable instance of the development of the music hall than that furnished by the London Pavilion, though it has no claim to antiquity, and though at this moment it seems to be backward in the race. Half-a-century ago it was a typical "sing-song." Many a still active *noceur* can remember when in return for a trifling payment at the door he received a voucher entitling him to its full equivalent in drink or tobacco to be consumed at scattered tables. Then, the Pavilion became the first music hall *de luxe* at the West End. It was floated as a limited liability company, and began an epoch of frenzied finance, from the effects of which the variety theatre as a commercial enterprise has hardly yet recovered. The immense profits earned by the London Pavilion appealed to the imagination, especially of the ultra respectable investor. Clergymen and district visitors abounded among its shareholders.

Half the music halls in the city were seized upon by unscrupulous promoters, who filled their own pockets and, for the most part, left their dupes to face a scandalous liquidation. From such a *débâcle* some of the finest properties of to-day were raised. But many music halls which in private

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hands had prospered fairly well were long hampered by over-capitalisation and discredited by the unimpressive, or worse, character of their directorates.

As for the Pavilion, it is built on the stable-yard of an inn, wherein some of the paraphernalia of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington was prepared. For a long time the adjoining Black Horse Inn enjoyed a right of light by way of a window, into the hall ; and a solicitor was sent to negotiate, with plenary powers and a cheque-book, the troublesome aperture. He found a new landlord, who rudely interrupted his overtures with the remark : “ If you’ve come to talk about that cursed window you can save your breath. I’ve had it bricked up this very morning ! ”

The gallery of the first hall had but two sides. The third was occupied by a horrible collection of “ scientific ” specimens called Dr Kahn’s Museum, whose last owner was the father of a now distinguished actor. The first proprietors of the London Pavilion, Loibl and Sonnhammer by name, made much money out of Arthur Lloyd, among the first performers habitually styled “ Great,” who persuaded them to abolish the refreshment coupon, and to establish a scale of admission prices. It is a curious characteristic of the London Pavilion that it has always been dependent on a particular comic singer — in succession, Leybourne, Macdermott, Charles Coborn, Dan Leno.

Sonnhammer separated from Loibl, and established Scott’s Restaurant. Loibl a while later made a monstrous deal with the old Metropolitan Board of Works, to whom he sold the property for £109,347. He set up his sons, Edward and Robert, in a well-known bric-a-brac shop in Wardour Street, and himself ran Long’s Hotel. The Pavilion was

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leased to Edward Villiers, who had been a pompous and uninteresting comedian at the Haymarket, and one of many managers of the Canterbury Music Hall. First as lessee and manager of the Pavilion, then as the dominant director of its board, he proved a shrewd financier and an astute showman. In 1882 the *Referee* charged him with permitting "foul and festering stuff to be brazed forth in defiance of decency and decorum," and paid £300 for the privilege. Villiers lived to a great age; so did his colleague and survivor, Hugh Astley, a brother of jolly old sporting Sir John. Astley's attitude as chairman of a board meeting, when an expensive engagement was under consideration, was masterly. "It's a lot of money," he would say, nodding sagaciously. "It's a devilish lot of money. Of course if the fellow's a draw—there you are. But if he's not—where are you?" a pronouncement which always left him free to comment on the event: "What did I always tell you?"

For years the Oxford Music Hall was conducted on old-fashioned lines, without event, in the interests of the heirs of one Syers. After some vicissitudes it was disposed of to a limited liability company and linked up with the Pavilion and the Tivoli—the "Syndicate," as it was simply known, having for its dominant spirit Henry Newson Smith, a city accountant, who first saw the possibilities of the music hall from the point of view of high finance; and who let its strenuous life kill him just as he neared supremacy.

Where once the Tivoli stood, at the corner of Adam Street and the Strand, is now an unpleasant pit, its future all uncertain. During its brief life of twenty-five years no star arose at the Tivoli, no name is inseparably associated with it

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as that of Sam Cowell was with the Canterbury, that of Leybourne with the Royal, Holborn, that of Macdermott with the London Pavilion. Truly enough, most of the popular favourites of its generation appeared there. But its programmes were shaped in accordance with routine rather than distinguished by sensational discoveries. The nearest approach to one was the exploitation of Lottie Collins in her dance, "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," which had already been done elsewhere and which had had an unspeakable origin in America. Its English edition was deftly and discreetly made by Mr Richard Morton.

What may be said of the Tivoli was that it developed from the model of the London Pavilion, a type then new to the West End, and it retained to the last, in entertainment and in entourage, a certain characteristic of the music hall as distinguished from the variety theatre.

It was another outgrowth of an inn. Many a still young Londoner can recall the four streets—John, Robert, James and William Streets—built by the brothers Adam, who gave their Christian names to their handiwork, and after whom this particular district was called the "Adelphi," from the Greek word signifying brothers. The site was occupied by Durham House, a palace built by Anthony de Beck, Bishop of Durham in Edward I.'s reign. Here Henry VIII. gave a great tournament on his marriage with Anne of Cleves. And here, after centuries, young London learned to drink lager beer in the so-called Tivoli Bier Garten, a saloon adorned by vast and daring pictures. The cellars ran towards those mysterious "Dark Arches" beloved of sensational writers about London life in Mid-Victorian days.

Should the Tivoli disappear (with that inestimable benefit

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of a liquor licence, for which the London Hippodrome and the London Coliseum so desperately strive), it will leave the Strand without a music hall ; though there were predecessors. The Tivoli stood within a stone's throw of the Coal Hole and the Cider Cellars, from which Thackeray drew his Cave of Harmony and Back Kitchen—not exactly, it should be noted. They combined to form an impression. Farther east was the Dr Johnson, another prehistoric music hall. And there was actually the Strand Musick Hall, where the “ Great ” Alfred Vance, and “ Jolly John ” Nash alternated with the masque of *Comus* ! The Strand is often cited as the forerunner of the Gaiety Theatre. The truth is, the Strand Musick Hall occupied a site which formed little more than the entrance hall of the first Gaiety. Here, maybe, Vance sang :

“ Slap, bang, here we are again,
Here we are again ; here we are again,
Slap bang, here we are again—
Such jolly dogs are we ! ”

The Tivoli Music Hall, with an associated restaurant, opened, just short of twenty-five years ago, with great *éclat*. Edward Terry was the chairman and added to words of condescension toward the new art a pious hope that there was money in it. There was not. The Tivoli came to grief.

It was seized upon and reconstructed by Newson Smith, and it became, in his hands—the quotation is apt in that it fitted him too—the “ fair embodiment of fat dividends.” Its social side was important. It was the rendezvous of managers and artists from the world over. Once, it became the rendezvous of a particularly smart kind of “ sportsmen,” but that is another story and comes into the history of the great Goudie bank frauds, not of this occasion. The veteran

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Charles Morton was the figure-head of the new Tivoli—his half-way house between the Alhambra and the Palace. And the late George Adney Payne, ensuing to Newson Smith, was its dominant influence—a big, cavalry kind of man, to whom the greatest artist was “my lad,” and who was probably the last music hall magnate whom a hundred-guinea serio respectfully but affectionately addressed as “Guv’nor.” With Payne’s death the genius of showmanship departed from the Tivoli. Its difficulties and dissensions became acute. It fell, languid and grateful, into the arms of the Strand Improvement Schemers.

CHAPTER VII

THE OLD MOGUL

Nell Gwynne in Drury Lane—The Chairman—Dan Leno's First Appearance—Marie Lloyd's Noviciate

WHEN lately the Old Mogul, or "Mo," in Drury Lane became a palace too, and black-ey'd beauties from Montmartre tripped impudently adown a "joy plank" to the amazement of the old inhabitants, some historian sought to identify Nell Gwynne with the Middlesex. I fear he had little better authority than his imagination. But truly enough the Mogul Tavern, with its twin, the Middlesex Music Hall, can go a long way back. It seems pretty certain there was some place of entertainment on this site in the days of Charles II. And shouting oranges makes dusty throats. All through living memory there has been a music hall in Drury Lane, homely and elemental, the robust mother of celebrity. Describing a visit paid to the Mogul in 1838, the editor of *The Penny Paul Pry* said: "We were agreeably surprised to notice the improvement which had taken place as regards the order kept in the room. We did not see a fight all the evening, neither did we see any police officer enter the place. We cannot in justice help acknowledging that the room is fitted up with good taste, and is really about as well adapted for its purpose as any concert-room in London."

I did not, without regret, share in the opening festivities

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at the new hall, when Mr Oswald Stoll's arms were quartered with those of the ancient proprietors. For the Middlesex was a place of many memories. I suppose Mr J. L. Graydon made the first advance toward civilisation when he displayed the legend : "No person can be admitted to this hall unless suitably attired." A sweep, in inky trappings, tendered fourpence at the pit door, and was sternly bidden by the Madam Graydon of that time to read the notice. He admitted that he could not. When it was read to him, he still asked for an explanation—the words were infinitely beyond him. He was gently reminded that he lacked, for instance, a collar. "Collar, missis !" he cried. "Collar ! Do you take people for blooming dogs ? "

When the Chairman had retired from nearly every other hall he lingered at the Middlesex, a genial, jovial, diplomatic person, who introduced each artist with deft laudation, who watched the temper of his audience, and, with the infinite intonations of his hammer encouraged its applause, or overwhelmed its discontent. He found plentiful leisure to shine upon a little court filling the eagerly sought chairs around his own particular table. Their occupants shed cigars and drink upon him ; and more substantial tokens, at seasons. Ever and anon passionate cries of his Christian name would come from the gallery : "'Arraye ! 'Arraye !" He would vouchsafe an occasional bow, in response. He could be stern. Two unfortunate artists had been soundly hissed. But when he procured silence he declared, with dignity : "In spite of all, ladies and gentlemen, the Sisters Trippit will oblige again."

Pictures of Harry Fox, the historic chairman of the Middlesex Music Hall, still abound in music hall land. He had a nose that might shame Cyrano, and a complexion of

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rich old mahogany. On Sunday nights he still presided in the smoke-room of the Mogul Tavern, which became a mart for music hall artists. An obliging little man, by name Ambrose Maynard, offered for a fee of a shilling to note in his memorandum-book the contracts effected at these Sunday gatherings. He was the first music hall agent; and out of his memorandum-book has grown a business now putting hundreds of thousands a year into the pockets of its professors and lately needing an Act of Parliament for its regulation. A music hall manager of the day bitterly reproached a "lion comique" with allowing Maynard to intervene in their hitherto pleasant (but probably one-sided) relations. "D'ye see, guv'nor, I can't read, nor write, myself," was the complete, and no doubt perfectly truthful, explanation of the artist.

I have a collection of the Middlesex programmes dating back to 1872—a priceless record. On 5th October 1885 the announcement is made of the first appearance in London of Dan Leno, "the great Irish comic vocalist and present champion dancer." I believe the honour of Dan's introduction to town is claimed also by the Foresters' Music Hall, but he may have worked both halls. *Milk for the Twins* was the delectable ditty he sang. But neither hall can really claim his first appearance, for "Little George, the infant wonder, contortionist and posturer," appeared at the Cosmothea Music Hall, Paddington, in 1864, being then somewhat short of four years. Meanwhile he served three hard apprenticeships, separated from the vagabond and versatile Leno Family; and married.

Miss Marie Lloyd was a popular favourite at the Middlesex before she was so eagerly sought after, farther west, as an

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exponent of the “other eye” philosophy. Songs of that day were :

“ Oh ! Jeremiah, don’t you go to sea !

Oh ! Jeremiah, stay along o’ me ! ”

—and an audacious essay in mischievousness which never failed to do its work—*The Boy I Love is up in the Gallery*. I read the other day, incredulously, that Marie Lloyd, whose very own name is Matilda Wood, was a pupil teacher ! I think in fact she learned dressmaking—an art in which she has commercial proficiency still, and fine taste. But she began her professional career so early in life that there can have been no really important chapter preceding. She was little more than a girl when she married ; and a tiny thing in long clothes was the strange companion of the “ Queen of Comedy ” when I had the honour of my introduction, at the Oxford. Naturally, her age was over-estimated in the days of her celebrity. She presented herself, with a fine, family entourage, at the office of a theatrical newspaper, and deposited in the safe keeping of its editor a certificate of her birth, on 12th February 1870, so that he might confound all future calumniators.

One of the very rare tragedies of the music hall occurred at the Middlesex, when an unhappy human target was shot by a rifle expert. But the hall has often been a battle-ground for less sanguinary encounters. Times and again have the elaborate comic and dramatic “ sketches,” which for years formed the staple of its programme, induced legal proceedings. The magistrate on occasion sympathised with Mr Graydon, and gave his show a certificate of good character and salutary influence. But fined him all the same. We have changed

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all that, if by an irregular process. The dramatic sketch, for which music hall managers have fought and bled during half-a-century, is now recognised, not by statute law, but by grace of the Lord Chamberlain. Sir Herbert Tree is just as free to play *Trilby* at the Middlesex as Mr Granville Barker is to play Shakespeare, or something like Shakespeare, or Shakespeare like nothing, at the Savoy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VITAL SPARK

Jenny Hill ; A Sordid Girlhood—A Dramatic Debut at the London Pavilion—A “ Memorable At Home ”—Bessie Bellwood

A WAN and stricken woman, in dull apartments at Brixton, told me the story of her life, soon to end, in its early forties. She had made the world laugh and sometimes weep. She had earned thousands—and not deliberately squandered them. With trembling fingers she turned over photographs, and treasured newspaper cuttings, to adorn her tale ; and one document, her apprenticeship indenture, the most wicked bond I have ever encountered, as between an artist and a manager. Poor Jenny Hill ! How grim in its satire seemed then the name she had gloried in—the Vital Spark. Without hesitation, without fear of contradiction from my contemporaries, or her colleagues, I would claim for Jenny Hill that in her day and generation she was the supreme genius of the Variety Stage. The public knew it too—the eager public that has taken the horses from her tiny brougham, its lamps always quaintly endorsed with her name.

I have heard a dozen stories of her origin, which was very humble, certainly—that her father was a cab-minder, hanging about a rank in Marylebone. She worked in an artificial-flower factory in that neighbourhood, whereof the proprietor also owned the neighbouring Marylebone Music Hall,

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one "Bob" Botting. And he would throw a few coppers to little Jenny, to make her sing : it so encouraged the other workers. Strangely, in her last illness, she found pleasure in twisting the paper flowers again.

Her first appearance on the stage (on the authority of both the parties) was made at the Aquarium Theatre, Westminster, in a pantomime produced by Joe Cave, who died but lately in the Charterhouse, to which the fine old actor had been admitted by the intercession of King Edward. *Mother Goose* was the pantomime, and little Jenny was the legs of a goose. Fearful of losing their clothes, the ballet children would make them into a bundle, to be carried on the head—over all, the goose mask. Jenny lost her way in the maze of the pantomime, lifted the mask, and found herself, a solitary, weeping, half-naked urchin, in the centre of the foot-lights, the conductor swearing freely, the audience shouting with laughter.

Soon, Jenny was apprenticed, for seven years, to a north country publican, to learn the trade of a serio-comic singer, and otherwise to make herself generally useful as the household drudge. It is all set out in the bond. The licensing laws were very lax in those days, and on market days the farmers would sit over their cups till one and two o'clock in the morning. While ever they lingered, the poor little serio-comic singer and dancer must be ready to take the stage of the "free and easy." And at five o'clock in the morning she must be alert, to scrub floors, polish pewter or bottle beer, at which she became quite an adept. At noon, the performances began again.

She married an acrobat, and he taught her his trade, not too kindly, as she had reason to remember throughout her



JENNY HILL : SINGING "THE COFFEE SHOP GAL"

Photograph : Sarony

THE VITAL SPARK

life. Hardly out of her teens, she found herself haunting the offices of the agents, in York Road ; standing unnoticed, day after day, a child in her arms, in the crowded waiting-rooms. One morning, with fearful courage, she waylaid the autocrat of the community ; and he gave her a note, which he bade her take full speed to Loibl of the London Pavilion. He advised a cab, lest the opportunity be lost. But Jenny walked, baby in arms, because——

Loibl read the note, and told the girl she might try her luck in the evening. She did, with such success that the “Great ” George Leybourne was kept waiting at the wings. The audience wanted more of its new favourite, and was not appeased till Leybourne, who was a pleasant fellow, took the slender creature in his arms, and held her up to view. There was a roar of laughter, and *Champagne Charley* was allowed to proceed.

Then Loibl was as good as his word, and gave Jenny an engagement, adding a glass of wine which made the starving woman light-headed. He congratulated her upon the agent who had brought her to his notice. “You might like to keep his letter,” said the manager ; “for it certainly compelled me to see you.” And this is how it read :

“DEAR LOIBL,—Don’t trouble to see the bearer. I have merely sent her up to get rid of her. She’s troublesome.
Yours,
A. M.”

Jenny Hill’s fortune was made ; but a modest fortune, comparatively. Alive, to-day, she would certainly command from two hundred to three hundred pounds a week, not to speak of America. But I doubt if her normal salary,

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excluding "benefits," pantomime engagements, and African excursions, ever exceeded a hundred pounds a week.

She was little, sharp-featured, and pretty on the stage, but terribly scarred by illness, on inspection. She could sing a tawdry ballad, as *Sweet Violets*, with effect; and she made a brilliant pantomime boy. But she was at her best in Cockney impersonation, as of 'Arry, describing the joys of Southend, and particularly of "The Coffee Shop Gal," a weary slut, with humorous impressions of her customers, and skill in that unlearnable dance the "Cellar Flap." Such things induced the belief that Jenny Hill might become a star on the "regular" theatre, as Nan in *Good for Nothing*, for instance. But she was a failure.

In her brave days she lived at a pretty place called the Hermitage, at Streatham, a straggling, secluded bungalow with a little farm-land, where a royal person had once hidden a romance. Jenny Hill used to bring the farm produce to town in her brougham, and assiduously vend it to her friends; but the adventure proved a costly failure. The Hermitage was the scene of one of the most wonderful gatherings ever seen in music hall land. It was on a Sunday in 1890; and the guest of honour was Tony Pastor, then the important music hall manager of America—its modern magnates, the Keiths and the Williamses and the Becks, were still unheard of. The vast commerce of English and American artists had not begun. And Jenny Hill's visit to the States about that time was almost the first of a London favourite to New York.

To the Hermitage that summer Sunday went every music hall celebrity of the day. The arrivals began at ten o'clock in the morning, and everyone was greeted under the Stars

THE VITAL SPARK

and Stripes with a freshly opened pint of champagne. There was a luncheon ; there was afternoon tea in the grounds, there was a dinner, with many speeches, and there were early morning travellers to London by the workmen's train.

But, indeed, there was no note so human as Bessie Bellwood's shriek of delight when she heard a hawker crying winkles down the lane. His stock, on a japanned tea-tray slung round his neck, was promptly commandeered. The shocked footmen, handing round tea, were dispatched for pins ; and the immortal singer of *Wot cheer, Ria*, whose real name was Mahoney, and who claimed to be a descendant of "Father Prout," but who, more certainly, began life as a rabbit skinner, in the New Cut, carefully divided her spoils among many applicants.

Poor Jenny Hill ! Prosperity was to leave her, but never popularity. Illness overtook her, and she faded away from the gaze of the public, which surely never knew her adversity, or it must have rallied in its thousands. She tried a visit to Africa, but came home worse than she went and finally found a refuge with her daughter, Peggy Pryde, who is not without her talent. Jenny Hill's supreme weakness was speech-making. At the London Pavilion her four or five songs were always supplemented by a voluble address of thanks to her dear public, which never occupied less time than her contracted performance had done. And an audience, admiring her skill, knowing of her good heart, and truly loving her, never found her tiresome—or at any rate admitted it.

CHAPTER IX

MUSIC HALL SOCIETY

Dan Leno's Drawing-room—The "Great Lion Comique"—The Modesty of Genius—A Series of Sisters—Peer and Peri

WHEN I remember that wonderful party at Streatham, with its ingenuous ostentation, its polychromatic vulgarity, its sincere and hearty generosity, I am tempted to wonder if the new society of the music hall is preferable to the old society. Perhaps the moment is not fairly chosen for a comparison. Years must pass ere the new generation of music hall performers has really arisen. The change of the old order is not complete. The new order has yet to develop any characteristic charm and interest. It is full of its own importance—artistic and economic; purse-proud, and rather illiterate.

It is nothing to its discredit, quite the contrary, that the genius of the variety stage was bred in the gutter, and born in a pot-house. If the same cannot be said of the theatrical artist, still, it is true of him that nine-tenths of the well-known actors and actresses of yesterday, and the day before, were of very humble origin. The fact that such a man as Dan Leno, without education, without the inspiration of an author, without the discipline of a stage manager, without any adventitious aid, should have been able to make so tremendously effective an appeal to the imagination, is the greater tribute to his genius.

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I shall never forget my first meeting with him. I was ushered into a wonderful drawing-room, all yellow and green plush, and bronze figures, and marble vases, and flower-pots on bamboo tripods; so dimly lighted that I fell headlong across the skull of a tiger still attached to the skin forming the hearthrug. Dan came from his hiding-place behind a screen, wreathed in smiles. "They mostly does that," he said.

Thanks to many circumstances, Dan Leno did not leave a great fortune. A dozen performers of to-day have probably accumulated ten times his ten thousand, own town and country houses, and snobbishly inform a new acquaintance that they prefer to cultivate their private friendships outside the profession.

I would give much to have seen the first music hall artist begin a banking account. The old stager drew his "packet" in gold and notes, and carried it on his person, till it was spent. He was reckless and thriftless. Most of the old-time celebrities died poor; some of them in the workhouse—all wrong of course; and yet, there was something about those joyous children of the night that has gone.

When William Holland, the "People's Caterer," took the Canterbury, he covered the entire floor with a carpet of quality. One of his advisers remonstrated. The rude fellows affecting the pit would surely spit on it. The instinct of one of the greatest, although one of the most unfortunate, showmen of our time was aroused. Half London was gazing in a few hours at this invitation on the hoardings: "Come and spit on Bill Holland's thousand-guinea carpet." In such an atmosphere, kind hearts beat freely; and coronets sometimes fell awry. Buy a professional newspaper to-day and read its sedate, its sordid

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announcements. Then compare them with the delicious *réclame* of a thirty-year-old *Era*.

Who was first styled "great"? It may have been Mackney, the "delineator of negro character," who certainly never saw a nigger at home. Or it may have been Alfred Vance. Which of them added "lion comique" to the description? Cole, the ventriloquist whose Merry Men are a clean and precious memory of the old-time music hall, called himself Lieutenant Cole; and no self-respecting ventriloquist thereafter neglected to provide himself with a naval or a military title. "Viscount" Walter Munro doubtless emulated "Lord" George Sanger. A queer little comic singer encouraged romantic surmise by describing himself as "The Nobleman's Son." Papa, I have heard, was a prosperous Birmingham tradesman. He bought old shoes, mended and varnished them, and retailed them *alfresco*. "Clobberer" is the technical description of this industry—honourable, but hardly noble.

Jenny Hill established a fashion when she called herself "The Vital Spark." These indeed were "few, well-chosen words," but there was no significance in a rival's selection of "The Vocal Spark." My old *Era* reminds me of "The Glittering Star of Erin," a clever Irish vocalist, Nellie Farrell; of "The Gem of Comedy," Ada Lundberg, a delightful exponent of Cockney humour who must have sung *Tooral-addy*, the while she polished a boot and her nose alternately, thousands of times at the London Pavilion. Miss Vesta Tilley, "The London Idol," was soon confronted by Miss Millie Hylton as "The People's Idol." Miss Kate Harvey had the disagreeing distinctions of being a "Simple Country Maid" and also "London's Leading Serio-Comic

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Lady." She proceeded to state that she was "allowed to be one of the finest figures on the music hall stage. Proportion, perfection, natural golden hair (not a wig) which so many of the serio-comics have copied." Miss Lily Marney "wished to avoid mistakes" by the record that she was "the original lady to wear comedy stockings and spring side boots; also, the original 'There's 'air.'" Miss Lizzie Villiers briefly stated: "There is Only One Champion Lady Clog Dancer—Our Liz." I like "The acknowledged Sarah Bernhardt of the music halls—*vide* Press." Another lady with dignity condensed her qualities into the line: "None but herself can be her parallel.—*Shakespeare*." On leaving Leeds the "Original Tootsie Sloper" was twice grateful. She thanked her manager, whom she described as "Esq.," for a "most comfortable engagement," and wished to assure "all pros." that they would find the best lodgings at an address she gave. I am afraid that a postscript to the advertisement of one well-known comedian reminding another well-known comedian of "the slight service rendered at Manchester on Saturday night, six weeks ago" had reference to a benefit forgot.

What domestic tragedy was enclosed between these parentheses of a beamish pantomime boy "The only and original Mrs . . ." Quite conclusive was the assertion: "They may pinch my talent but they can't spoil my beauty." A frenzied favourite asked: "What price this, you blooming kippers? Went better than ever at Bolton last week. All dates filled for two years," but added the inharmonious postscript: "Monday next unexpectedly vacant. Wire offers." Another lady declared that she was "going bigger than ever after her recent bereavement. Kind regards to all friends." The catholicity of the profession is exhibited

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in "Pianist wanted for a free-and-easy. One who can brew preferred." And again, candidates are invited for inclusion in a guitar band. There is the inevitable *P.S.*, meant obviously for a rival impresario, "I said players; not string ticklers."

Conning this old *Era*, I am constrained to wonder what has become of all the Sisters. Two or three girls singing and dancing in unison were an inevitable feature of every music hall programme for years. There were sisters even in old Canterbury days—the Sisters Brougham, two beautiful women, accomplished musicians, one of whom became the mother of Violet Cameron. The greatest vogue was that of the Sisters Leamar, who collaborated with the staff of *The Sporting Times* in the establishment of a restaurant, originally of modest style and dimensions, legally described, but never known, as the Cafe Vaudeville—

" Romano's, Italiano
Paradise in the Strand "—

sang these buxom beauties, who will be more readily associated with—

" Two girls of good Society,
We dance, we sing !
We're models of propriety,
Too wise to wear the ring."

Their songs were wont to be paraphrases of waltz refrains. *Mind you inform your Father*, for instance, is akin to *My Queen Waltz*.

As for the "good society," the Leamars were the daughters of one "Cokey" Lewis, whose trade, followed in the New Cut, is apparent from his nickname. He became the devoted attendant of his prosperous girls. When, having settled

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into their first substantial house at Brixton, they gave a great party to their West End clients, the old man was found by an expeditionary guest toying with the taps of the bath. He watched the copious flow of water in wonder and amaze. Then looking over his shoulder at the intruder remarked in a grimly humorous way : “ Someone’s going to be drowned in this blooming thing ; and it won’t be me ! ”.

I am not aware that the Sisters Richmond or the Sisters Grosvenor—“ The Daisy Cutters ” *vide* advertisement—were related to the ducal families whose names they bore. But one of the Sisters Bilton, who used to sing :

“ Fresh, fresh, fresh as the new-mown hay,”

married the Earl of Clancarty. Poor Countess Belle is dead. One hears she made an exemplary wife. These unions are not apt, however, to make for happiness. A popular favourite of the burlesque stage, who married into the peerage too, used to address to her old friends savagely humorous letters, descriptive of the society she enjoyed in the seclusion of her stately home—just an insolent annual, ostentatiously parochial visit from the rector, whose “ wife, thank God, declined to accompany him ; otherwise, cut by the County ! ” My lady’s state may still have been more gracious than that of the music hall agent who, after three years’ residence in a fashionable suburb, gleefully reports that he is now received everywhere, “ except at the golf club.”

Experience has not proved the music hall artist to be a very effective club-man. Attempts to associate him in this fashion have failed, from the Junior Garrick Club onwards. At several of the old-time music halls the police used to overlook the fact that a private bar was kept open for the use of

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the artists and their friends till one or two o'clock in the morning—just harmless conviviality. This did not conduce to early rising. A stroll to the "York Corner," a stretch of pavement off Waterloo Road where there was once a regular colony of agents, would kill the day. On Sunday a drive to Hampton Court was the correct thing. And then a joyous gathering at the Kennington or Brixton home of the "lion comique."

Charles Godfrey was one of the last of the irresponsible roysterers. A game pudding of Gargantuan size used to grace his Sunday evening board, and one night a bibulous cook served it by the simple process of rolling it down a flight of stairs. Each hungry guest contrived to intercept a fragment. A superior person once thought to snub Godfrey by remarking that he had never heard one of the great man's favourite songs. Next day forty-six piano-organs played it outside the incautious creature's house. A nightly attendant at the Canterbury was a convivial undertaker whose pride it was to have buried most of the music hall celebrities of his time in a manner befitting his fame. "Don't let —— make a blooming circus of me when I'm gone," were nearly the last words of the forlorn and forgotten comedian.

For years the inner life of the music hall artist was unnoticed by the novelist, excepting F. W. Robinson, who is said to have "discovered" Barrie, and to have opened to him the pages of his magazine, *Home Chimes*. Robinson wrote moderately, and even affectionately, of music hall life, which has recently furnished material for quite a good deal of lurid fiction. Dickens, of course, had "done" the circus in *Hard Times*. But circus people never allowed his picture to have merit.

CHAPTER X

EAST END ENTERTAINMENT

The Britannia Festival—"Saloons" and their Style—*Champagne Charley* and *Hamlet*—Pavilion Celebrities—Grand Opera at the Standard—Kate Vaughan's Origin

"**E**AST is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet"; but the disposition of the entertainments of East and West London is to bely the poet. They used to differ not only as to East and West. South of the Thames, "transpontine" was the word, lay another colony more akin to the eastern group, still with a distinction. But the old types have disappeared. The East-ender and the Surrey-sider come west, or indulge the picture palace habit, with an occasional divagation to a suburban empire. The pleasure palaces of the east and of the south-east are metragabolised, or missing. The world-famous Britannia Theatre at Hoxton, after many vicissitudes, has become a picture palace of sorts. The Surrey Theatre is a "popular" music hall, the Pavilion Theatre, once proudly "The Drury Lane of the East," opens its doors occasionally to casual visitors with Yiddish drama. The Standard Theatre is a Hippodrome or an Empire.

To the old stager what memories these names recall! Nor need he be such a very old stager. In the nineties what playgoer worth his salt would have willingly missed the Britannia pantomime, in which the septuagenarian Sara Lane would

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play principal boy, in all the bravery of tights and trunks, to the delight of the gallery boys, who worshipped her ; or the still more interesting Britannia Festival, which was in the nature of a benefit and a levee. Old-fashioned fare was served up with old-fashioned liberality at the Britannia—a farce, a melodrama, an extravaganza, the interstices stuffed with songs and dances and acrobatic antics still failed to surfeit an audience which began to assemble at six o'clock and went home hungry at midnight. No ! Hungry “is not the word.” For few restaurants get rid of so much solid food as the Britannia audience would consume during its five or six hours' dramatic debauch. Men walked to and fro incessantly with trays groaning beneath the weight of pies in infinite variety, thick slices of bread plastered with jam, chunks of cheese, slabby sandwiches, fried fish, shell-fish, jellied eels. Gallons of ale washed down mountains of food.

The Festival was a function unique in my recollections of the stage. Toward midnight, the regular programme having been faithfully worked off, the curtain would rise again in a strange moment of silence. The shouts of waiters, the grunts of satisfied hunger, the recriminations of gallery critics, the shrieks of babies—all were hushed. Enthroned in the centre of the stage was her Britannic majesty—the tragedy queen, Prince Pretty-pet, grand almoner and all combined, of Hoxton. I believe Sara Lane divided with Father Kelly the freedom of Nile Street. Around her on the occasion of the Festival were ranged the members of her company, each dressed in a “favourite character” ; a polychromatic court whose constituents came forward one by one to make dutiful obeisance to the Queen, what time a pompous old elocutionist recited an appropriate, original verse of a yard-long doggerel

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a presentation to Madam from her grateful servants ; presents from her in exchange, approving yells from all parts of the theatre, and, most interesting of all, “ well-chosen ” gifts showered on the members of the company by their admirers, as each retired from the presence—not ephemeral flowers or tawdry trinkets, but joints of meat, rolls of flannel, packets of tea, umbrellas, stockings—selected, I doubt not, with exact knowledge that Juliet was a respectable married woman, really, with a large family ; and that Claud Melnotte’s salary was not calculated to overload the Sunday dinner-table. Sara Lane died a few years ago, advanced in years and wealthy. I am not concerned with the adventures of her old home after her death.

She received the Britannia as a sacred trust from her husband and former manager, Samuel Lane, who had secured the services in perpetuity of a pretty soubrette, Sara Wilton, by marrying her. The Britannia Theatre developed from the Britannia Saloon, as the Britannia Saloon, after narrowly escaping extinction for an illegal performance, had developed from the Britannia Tavern. The saloons were fore-runners of the music hall. They had a particular licence which prevented the performance of Shakespeare but permitted the consumption of food and drink and tobacco indiscriminately. In the course of time the saloon licence was abolished—the proprietors had the alternative of rising to the dignity of the theatre or sinking to the level of the music hall. The only other saloons of much interest for these presents were the Grecian Saloon, which became the Grecian Theatre, in City Road, and the Effingham Saloon, Whitechapel, which became the East London Theatre, and was lately destroyed by fire, as Wonderland, an East End correspondent

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to the National Sporting Club. The popular idol at the East London Theatre was one Harry Simmons, who in the course of a melodrama inherited a million of money. "What shall I do with it, what shall I do with it?" he mused. "Well, 'Arry, I should buy a pair of boots, first," said a gallery boy with friendly candour.

George Leybourne, the "lion comique," owned the East London Theatre at one time, and to brace up business would drive down from the west to sing *Champagne Charley* whenever the opportunity occurred. Time being precious, any performance was peremptorily halted directly his brougham was heard. He rattled off *Champagne Charley* and away again, it might even be as an interlude to Hamlet's soliloquy. His leading man, Raynor, would give vent to furious rage on these occasions. One night he tapped Leybourne on the breast with the ponderous statement: "The difference between me, sir, and you, sir, is the difference between heaven and hell." With incredible aptitude Leybourne cried: "*Facilis descensus Averni—and don't you wish it was true, my boy!*"

Across the road is the vast Paragon Music Hall, telling again the story of attenuated dividends. Built on the site of an old tea-garden it was for years the objective of a fanatical apostle of temperance, who used to exhort its patrons to turn their backs on hell, and who defied all attempts at police restraint. Mr Frederick Charrington, who is understood to have sacrificed a million of money rather than participate in the profits of the drink trade, distinguished himself quite recently again by an incursion to the House of Commons.

A few hundred yards westward from the Paragon, the

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Pavilion Theatre once had a reversion of Drury Lane drama, and did it uncommonly well. I have seen three generations of the Lloyd family disport in pantomime here. Bessie Bellwood once asked a friend to prompt her in a few words of Yiddish so that, on the occasion of her benefit at the Pavilion, she might suitably return thanks to her loyal Hebrew supporters. "Wish 'em a meese meschinna," said the rascal. She did, and there was a riot ; for it means "A sudden death to you !" The Pavilion doubtless occurs to many only in association with "The Whitechapel Murder," as it was called, before there were other Whitechapel murders more horrible. A sanctimonious commercial traveller, Henry Wainwright, murdered his mistress, Harriet Lane, a ballet girl at the Pavilion, and believed he had burned her body in destructive chemicals, whereas he had used a preservative !

It is, I believe, the fact that the Standard Theatre, in Bishopsgate, was rebuilt by the elder Douglass without the aid of an architect. It used to find support for an opera season, doubtless from the many Jews in the neighbourhood. At another time H. J. Byron, seeing the house half empty, asked Douglass what had become of his audience. "Gone west, to Covent Garden," said the old man. "To pick pockets, I suppose," commented the irrepressible Byron.

John Douglass, a later proprietor, had a genius for stage effect, and for years jealously watched Harris's productions at Drury Lane, which he claimed habitually reproduced his "sensations." A letter from Douglass to *The Era* was the inevitable sequel to a Drury Lane first night :

"Seeing that a hansom cab is used in the new drama at Drury Lane, I beg to state that a hansom cab, drawn by

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a live horse, was first employed in my drama . . . produced at the Standard Theatre in . . .”

—and so on, with real rain, a real flood, a real balloon. The little man's statements were mostly indestructible.

One moiety of the Victoria Theatre, near Waterloo Station, is now a temperance lecture hall ; the other, shops and warehouses. Originally the Coburg, it was known to its more respectful patrons as “Queen Victoria's Own Theayter,” and to the more affectionate as “The Bleeding Vic,” from the character of the plays most accustomed. A particularly popular performance here was that of *Oliver Twist*, with a Nancy capable of being dragged round the stage by her own hair. The gallery would follow her progress with the foulest imprecations. It may interest the curious to know that the original of Henry Leigh's poem, *When I played the Villains at the Vic*, was John Bradshaw, a ponderous tragedian of that house. The Victoria Theatre was the *alma mater* of incomparable Nellie Farren. I recall a rich and rare comedian in the melodrama called *Grace Darling: The Wreck off the Goodwin Sands*. He had little to say except : “I've had two of rum shrub,” and therefrom to increase, as he got drunker : “I've had two twos of rum shrub,” up to, it may be, “I've had twenty-two twos of rum shrub.” Cave, then the manager, afterwards identified this genius for me as James Fawn, to become famous as the singer of *If you want to know the Time, ask a Policeman*.

If the Surrey Theatre, built as a circus in the long ago to compete with Philip Astley, thereafter a Shakespearean house, had done no more for the popular entertainment, it might claim consideration as a wonderful training school for

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writers of melodrama, in succession to the Grecian, from which the Conquests migrated. George Conquest was a remarkable man—a daring acrobat, an inventive stage mechanician, an ingenious maker of “properties,” a fair actor (though he stuttered badly), a shrewd manager, and a clever writer of melodrama—say, rather, clever in the adaptation of drama from the French stage, of which his knowledge was extensive and peculiar. In the days when three-fifths of our “original” plays were unacknowledged adaptations from the French, critics of importance knew of no better expedient when they were in doubt of being fooled than to hurry off to George Conquest, summarise the story, and be sure that in an instant he would enlighten them as to the French original. When an English author read to him the first half of a play founded on *Leonard*, which we know as *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, Conquest blandly took up the recital and summarised the second half for his discomfited visitor. Paul Meritt, originally a salesman in a carpet warehouse, Henry Pettitt, Arthur Shirley all frankly and gratefully acknowledged George Conquest as their preceptor. And Madam Conquest, in her capacity of a ballet mistress, gave us Kate Vaughan.

But that was at the Grecian, a tea-garden and theatre attached to the Eagle Tavern.

“Up and down the City Road,
In and out the Eagle.
That’s the way the money goes.
Pop goes the weazel !”

—ran the old song. The weazel is an instrument used in tailoring, I believe ; the suggestion, that its deposit with the pawnbroker was the last resort of the drunkard.

CHAPTER XI

THE LOST THEATRES OF LONDON

Old-time Death-traps—Value of Theatre Property—Growth of the Suburban Houses—Boucicault at Astley's—Adah Isaacs Menken—Mrs Langtry and the Methodists—Mr Keith of New York

WHAT a change in the architecture of the London theatres a generation has seen—not merely an increase in external beauty and importance, but an improvement in every structural detail, and in the safeguards against disaster. Honour to whom honour is due. And that is, chiefly, to the London County Council. No doubt it overworked its powers. Acts of official tyranny and eccentric insistence were not unknown. The disposition of the theatrical manager was to exaggerate and to antagonise this phase; to piteously resent frequent and heavy demands upon his purse—which, after all, was of no public concern—to fulfil requirements grudgingly, and to represent the County Council, on all occasions, as a malignant autocrat, whereas it is now generally recognised as mainly a public benefactor. Many of the theatres of thirty years ago were death-traps. Some of the most pretentious were foully insanitary. *En parenthese*: when the County Council insisted that its powers extended to the Augean stable of music hall humour, it did not a little good there, also; though the cleansing process is still terribly incomplete.

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With the Savoy Theatre, built with money coined at the Opera Comique out of the early Gilbert and Sullivan operas—as the earnings of *The Colonel* built the Prince's, as those of *Dorothy* built the Lyric, and as those of *Sweet Lavender* made Edward Terry the owner of the house to which he had prematurely given his name—D'Oyly Carte was allowed to have said the last word in theatre structure. Recent County Council specifications for improvements peremptorily demanded after an interval of little more than thirty years, formed an interesting commentary on the praise so lavishly bestowed upon the original Savoy.

What, again, is remarkable is the fact that the number of the London theatres does not appreciably increase. The music halls grow. But for almost every new theatre, one can cite an old one that has disappeared. One His Majesty's to another His Majesty's succeeds; and Gaiety to Gaiety. In several cases, to the perplexity of the historian, if not of to-day, of to-morrow, an old name has been clapped on to a new house. There have been half-a-dozen Queen's Theatres, three Globes, or more, two Strand Theatres, two Prince's Theatres, two Prince of Wales's; and so on.

When Toole took the Folly, which was originally the Charing Cross Theatre, he borrowed a fashion from America, and re-named the house once more—Toole's Theatre. In London this identification of a theatre with a person seems fatal. Toole was soon on his travels; and the house was eventually overwhelmed by the expansion of Charing Cross Hospital. So with Terry's—the house stands; theatre no longer, but picture palace. Daly hardly endured a season in Daly's Theatre. Sir Charles Wyndham mostly chooses a domicile other than Wyndham's Theatre. The Hicks

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Theatre soon became the Globe. The Whitney Theatre figured but for a short interval between the Waldorf and the Strand.

London playgoing, per head of its population, is small compared with that of New York, for instance. Were it equal there could be no more profitable investment of a million than in the building of ten new theatres in the West End. It were wise, perhaps, not to dedicate one to music. That seems fatal. The National Opera House, projected by Colonel Mapleson, on the Embankment, hung for a long time between heaven and earth, and then became the headquarters of the detective system, as New Scotland Yard. The Royal English Opera House went a little further. It even produced an English opera ; then declined to opera bouffe. Now, the Royal English Opera House is the Palace Theatre. The tragical story of Hammerstein's London Opera House is still incomplete.

But, although fortunes are lost in foolish stage speculation, most of the actual owners of the London theatres draw regular and satisfactory dividends on the bricks and mortar outlay. Old John Lancaster, the cotton spinner from the north who built the Shaftesbury Theatre to gratify the ambition of his beautiful wife, Ellen Wallis, would grimly contemplate the balance-sheet of a Shakespearean production ; but always consoled himself with the reflection that the Shaftesbury, as a real estate investment, had never failed to yield a satisfactory return. There was an amusing contretemps on the first night there. The iron curtain stuck—it even refused to be demolished by hammers ; and the manager, one J. C. Smith, crippled by gout, had to be wheeled on, in front of the recalcitrant safety curtain, to dismiss the audience.

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Shaftesbury Avenue emphasises the disposition to centralise in theatre building. In the sixties and the seventies the suburban theatre was undreamed of. There were a dozen houses remote from Charing Cross, but there was nothing parochial in the style of their entertainment, or in the personnel of their patronage. The West End playgoer, including the Prince of Wales, cheerfully made the pilgrimage to Islington to see Dolly Dolaro and Emily Soldene; or to Sadler's Wells, or to Marylebone, or to the Surrey, where Phelps and his seceded comrades, Mrs Warner and Creswick respectively, most creditably revived Shakespeare; or to the Grecian, where at one time the pantomimes shamed Drury Lane. These theatres were technically "London theatres" in their day, just as the remnant of the suburban theatre is actually provincial.

One said the remnant; for, of the thirty suburban playhouses that suddenly encircled London, half were soon in financial difficulties, and now are music halls or picture houses, or anything. The idea of the suburban theatre was born when the Grand Theatre, Islington, abandoned "productions," and began, for the sake of economy, to entertain the touring companies formed to visit the provincial theatres. Mr J. B. Mulholland, an assiduous actor, with a genius for management, came to London in charge of a provincial company, adventuring a season at the Princess's; and saw the possibilities of the London suburbs. He spent his leisure on bus tops, ranging from Uxbridge to Homerton, from Hampstead Heath to Greenwich; and his eye fell on Camberwell Green, where he built the Metropole, and made a fortune. He had a hundred imitators; and the suburban theatre was disastrously overdone.

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None of the earlier outlying theatres has survived. The Grand Theatre, Islington, which, as the earlier Philharmonic, played so important a part in the history of the English stage, has for long been an "Empire" tributary to one of the great music hall trusts. But it was here that opera bouffe took deep root, first, to be nurtured by Charles Morton. Its neighbour, Sadler's Wells, now also a music hall, with the aid of the Batemans, evicted from the Lyceum, and of Miss Marriott, the incomparable Jeanie Deans (who used to advertise with pride the number of thousand times she had played *Hamlet*), long tried to live up to the traditions of Phelps's thirty-four fine revivals of Shakespeare. After Mrs Warner, a much esteemed lady at whose disposal, during her last illness, Queen Victoria placed a royal carriage, ceased to manage the Marylebone, Joe Cave made a brave struggle, with the aid of such artists as Ben Webster, Toole, Paul Bedford, Phelps, James Anderson, George Honey, Walter Montgomery, John Ryder, Charles Warner, Herman Vezin, Miss Litton, Celeste and Mrs Sterling. But the famous house sank to the level of a gaff, and finally became, of course, a music hall.

Within living memory, the City had its very own theatre, the City of London Theatre, in Cripplegate. It enjoyed its greatest distinction under Mrs Honnor; its greatest prosperity under Nelson Lee and Edward Johnson—the last proprietors of an authentic Richardson's Show. On its site stands an educational institute. Farther east, the Garrick Theatre in Whitechapel and the Park Theatre, at Camden Town, both of which have disappeared—the former (never so distinguished as its name) in flames—have no particular interest for us.

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When Dion Boucicault acquired Astley's Amphitheatre in 1862 he meant to teach the West End managers a lesson. He addressed a letter to *The Times* contrasting the dinginess, ill ventilation and general discomfort of the London theatres of that time with the Winter Garden of New York—the direction of which he had then recently relinquished. He offered to head a subscription with five thousand pounds for the purpose of erecting a suitable and comfortable London theatre; and in the meantime he experimented with Astley's. He converted the circus ring into stalls, pit stalls, and pit. He laid out a little garden, with intermittent fountains, between the stalls and the orchestra. Adjoining the theatre, on the site of what had been known as Astley's Cottage, he projected a huge café, which was to be constructed with foyers for promenaders between the acts; and an open-air restaurant, on the flat Moorish roof, commanding the river. All this, if you please, more than half-a-century ago! Boucicault never really approached the latter part of his scheme. He produced a play taken from *The Heart of Midlothian* as *The Trial of Effie Deans*. He was soon in monetary difficulties and again he came west—to the St James's.

As for Astley's, it enjoyed a vogue which Boucicault had been unable to procure, while Adah Isaacs Menken, the beautiful American Jewess, whose four husbands included John C. Heenan, the "Benicia Boy," played Mazeppa. London lost its head about her. Dickens accepted the dedication of a volume of poems which it was said Swinburne helped her to write—though the evidence is more than doubtful. And after a few years of exultant recklessness she died penniless, in Paris. The still living

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Kate Santley was a member of her company, and James Fernandez, who died but recently, Fernandez agreed to decide a bet made by some noble sportsmen, as to whether the lovely form nightly posed on the back of a moderately wild horse, to traverse an ingeniously terraced "rake," was all Menken's, or partly due to what the costumiers call "symmetricals," in plain English, padding. Fernandez, to secure his evidence, gripped the actress with a cruel firmness when he lifted her to the horse that night; and, deeply enraged by his incomprehensible conduct, she cut his cheek open with a short riding whip she carried.

For five and twenty years Astley's, acquired by the circus family of Sanger, alternated between popular drama and equestrian shows. In 1902 it vanished before street improvements.

Over the bridge to the Westminster Aquarium—to concern ourselves, for the moment, with its associated theatre only. Theatrical property has compelled some strange bedfellows. General Booth, when he bought the Grecian Theatre, found to his great discomfiture that he had to maintain the Eagle Tavern as a licensed house. And when the governing body of the Wesleyan Methodists acquired the Westminster Aquarium it had to take over Mrs Langtry and her lease of the Aquarium Theatre, and to connive at their continuance. But Madam, who had spent a fortune on the reconstruction and chaste decoration of the theatre, and on a series of productions which she hoped might resuscitate it, was already a little tired. She proved amenable to reason, and ready money. So the Imperial Theatre was merged in the ruin of the Westminster Aquarium.



JOHN C. HEENAN: "THE BENICIA BOY"

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Henry Labouchere, who had graduated in theatrical management at the Queen's Theatre, Long Acre—now a seed warehouse, memorable for the first association of Ellen Terry and Irving—was the presiding genius of the Aquarium Theatre, which he opened with *Jo*, a version of *Bleak House* which was not intrinsically better than other adaptations from Dickens but in which Jenny Lee achieved an historic success. For a few years, the Imperial Theatre, if it did not prosper, enjoyed a considerable distinction, by reason of Miss Marie Litton's revivals of old comedy. Thereafter, it took to bad ways. The neighbourhood would be flooded with free tickets, or "orders." Unhappy man who used one! When he entered the theatre he was waylaid for a "fee" of some kind at every turn. His hat, coat, umbrella, were torn from him by the cloak-room attendants. "Thank you, madam, I prefer to keep my hat—I have neither coat nor umbrella!" said a bold fellow of my acquaintance. "Then you ought to be damned well ashamed of yourself," promptly retorted the lady.

For fifteen years the Princess's Theatre has been to let. About that time it was purchased by Benjamin Franklin Keith, the maker of the American music hall, who meant to run it, after the fashion of his New York and Boston houses, with what is called "continuous vaudeville." The entertainment begins midday, and is incessant till midnight, though the "stars" have appointed times much as they would have here, say at four o'clock in the afternoon, and ten o'clock at night; and intervals are effected, during which the building clears, by the performance of specially unpalatable artists, or "chasers" as they are vividly described. Your admission fee entitles you, however, to endure the

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twelve hours' performance, if you can ; or you may seek relief in many apartments adjacent to the main hall—tea-rooms, reading-rooms, writing-rooms. The domestic woman—who would, indeed, hardly overcrowd any American institution—may bring her baby for deposit in Keith's nursery, complete her shopping (parcels care of Keith's), summon papa from his office to meet her at the "family resort" ; then make for home. Whether London would ever have taken to the idea, we can only surmise. Keith was obstinate in his structural scheme. The County Council did not see eye to eye with him, and he just let the Princess's stand. His most intimate associate never dared ask him his intentions. But he once assured me that he had bought at a price which forbade a serious loss, reckoned by the immense increase in the value of the land. Recently, it was stated that a vast hotel would replace Keith's. But this scheme fell through.

Keith spent much time in London ; but never mixed with music hall "magnates" here, or received music hall performers. He came and went unknown, though he could never be mistaken, after one encounter—a heavily built man, very bald, with a thick moustache, habitually wearing a black frock coat, a black "bow," an old-fashioned silk hat. He was shrewd, inquiring, reserved. He began life with what is called a "privilege" to sell pea-nuts in the enclosure of the Barnum and Bailey circus, saved enough money to buy a cheap "freak," which he exhibited in Boston, entered New York when there were but two music halls—Koster and Bials, corresponding in style to our Pavilion, or the defunct Trocadero, and Tony Pastor's, more like the old-time Canterbury—and in the twenty-five years he had to live,

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built up a system that eventually employed millions of money in the exploitation of hundreds of music halls throughout the United States.

But the Princess's: It seems certain that the famous old house belongs to the lost theatres of London now. A hundred years will soon have passed since Mr Hamlet, silversmith, of Princes's Street, Piccadilly, rashly ventured a panorama here. Fire procured him an issue out of his afflictions, happy or otherwise. At any rate, having built a new house, at a great cost, he promptly became bankrupt. For ten years, opera was mostly the attraction. Then came Charles Kean's over-loaded revivals of Shakespeare. He introduced a bear to *The Winter's Tale*, and caused the British Museum to be ransacked for authorities. But his aims were noble; and his companies (which included the Terry children) were distinguished.

Thereafter, Stella Colas, the French actress, whose Juliet an eminent critic described as "no better than she should be," made her first appearance at the Princess's. Henry Morley declared her to be "abominable . . . employing the stage artifices and ghastly grimaces of a French *ingénue*." Many of Boucicault's melodramas were produced here, notably *The Streets of London*, *Arrah na Pogue* and *After Dark*; and Charles Reade's prison play, *It's Never Too Late to Mend*, which led to a fierce altercation between Vining the manager, on the stage, and Oxenford of *The Times*, in his box. Vining reminded the critics, one of whom had verbally denounced the prison scene, that they had come in for nothing. Oxenford demanded a public apology, and, with the support of the audience, got it.

An immense fortune, made out of Charles Reade's *Drink*,

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enabled the Gooch family to rebuild the Princess's Theatre. One of Phipps's characteristic well-shaped, or three-tier houses, considered to be most beautiful at the time, was erected, but was conspicuously unfortunate, till Wilson Barrett, who had captivated London by a still unequalled performance of *Mercutio*, supporting *Modjeska*, at the Court Theatre came along. He began a new chapter in the history of melodrama with *The Lights of London*, and continued it with *The Silver King*. I suppose they still remain the two best plays of their *genre* since *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*. Barrett is credited with many failures at the Princess's. I believe he had but two of serious import—*Hamlet*, and Lytton's posthumous *Brutus*. And on neither did his fortune disappear, in truth. His followers at the Princess's have no interest.

Barrett cherished the ambition to return to the Princess's, when his star again ascended. Fate took him instead to another dilapidated temple of Thespis, the Olympic, which, later, caught the fever of variety, and was kindly enveloped in the Strand Improvement Scheme. Grass, meanwhile, hides its ruins. Near here was Craven House, where Elizabeth of Bohemia lived—the guest, but not the wife, of its owner—and there was an eventual tavern, “The Queen of Bohemia,” which Philip Astley merged in a circus, to be replaced by a theatre whose early history was written in a round dozen bankruptcies, rapidly succeeding. Vestris gave the Olympic its first vogue. Then, it had for lessee one Walter Watts, who cut a great figure with eighty thousand pounds stolen from the Globe Insurance Company; and hanged himself in gaol, while awaiting his trial. Alfred Wigan managed the Olympic for years. Tom Taylor's

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historic melodrama, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, ran here four hundred and six nights in the sixties. Henry Neville probably lived to play the part as many thousand times. He succeeded to the management ; and produced a score melodramas only less remarkable than *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*.

Traversing the Strand from west to east one misses the Folly, formerly the Charing Cross, later Toole's Theatre, the Gaiety, the Olympic, the Globe, the Opera Comique and the Strand—if the pilgrim should persevere to Fleet Street he would come upon the remnant of an old music hall, the Doctor Johnson. Few theatres have done so little to justify their existence as the Folly—once the scene of Mr William Woodin's Entertainment. Lydia Thompson procured it a vogue, with burlesque. But the ramshackle old place could have had no more fitting end than the hospital !

Jerry-built and dangerous, those unhealthy twins the Opera Comique and the Globe were short lived. The wonder is that they endured so long. The Opera Comique contrived, however, to impress Gilbert and Sullivan on London. The Globe is associated with two remarkable runs—of *Les Cloches de Corneville* and *Charley's Aunt*, the former brought forward from the Folly, the latter from the Royalty. And both theatres recall a “ scene ” to be considered later.

Burlesque is nowadays habitually associated with the Gaiety. Really, the Strand has the prior claim to its origin—though the most successful burlesque of all, *Black-Ey'd Susan*, was done at the Royalty, in 1866, before the Gaiety was thought of, with Charles Wyndham as a Deal Smuggler. The Strand stood nearly a hundred years. But it has little interest for us till the Swanborough family settled in to

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do Byron's early burlesques, with Marie Wilton for their star. Madam Swanborough had a pleasant disposition, and the way of Mrs Malaprop—if the quaint things she said, and the quaint things Byron said she said, and the encrustations of a swarm of smaller wits were collated they would fill a book. But the Swanborough family was probably too large to live on one small theatre, and came to grief. John Sleeper Clarke, the rich and rare American comedian, took the Strand, but mostly let it. Here then, Florence St John achieved some of her greatest triumphs in Opera Bouffe; a woman demonstrated the ability of her sex to write farce with *Our Flat*, receiving, they say, fifty pounds for her share of the spoil, and *A Chinese Honeymoon* ran upwards of a year.

Two historic melodramas were produced at the Duke's Theatre, Holborn, *The Flying Scud* and *New Babylon*. In the latter play Caroline Hill, of the wonderful golden hair, appeared. Then the Duke's considerably caught fire, and made room for the First Avenue Hotel. The neighbouring Holborn Amphitheatre has disappeared.

Dr Distin Maddick's romantic attachment for the old Prince of Wales's Theatre, where the Bancrofts revolutionised the stage and made a huge fortune by the production of Tom Robertson's "tea-cup comedies," has saved this from becoming a lost theatre. With a fortune nearing a quarter of a million, 'tis said, made out of surgery, he built the Scala Theatre—a disappointing realisation of his dreams, one fears.

CHAPTER XII

ROUND LEICESTER SQUARE

Early Victorian Horrors—Prize-fighters at the Alhambra—Leotard and Blondin—King Edward and the Empire—Winston Churchill—Prudes on the Prowl—Murder of Amy Roselle

I SUPPOSE there is no square mile containing so much of interest to the student of the history of popular entertainment as that of which Leicester Square is nearly the centre. Circus, theatre, music hall, panorama, waxwork exhibition—they hem it in, on every side. Hither came the disgraceful *Judge and Jury* show from the Strand—a mock trial of a scandalous cause—the *Poses Plastiques* (particular patrons welcome to the dressing-room) and other delights of the Early Victorian *noceur*. Let the Alhambra and the Empire, dominating respectively the east and the north side, suffice for this chapter. There was a design to complete the quadrangle with theatres; but new buildings, meanwhile erected, prevented this development. In one, the Green Room Club—probably the most exclusively theatrical club in the world, clinging convivially to the tradition of one room—has found a home.

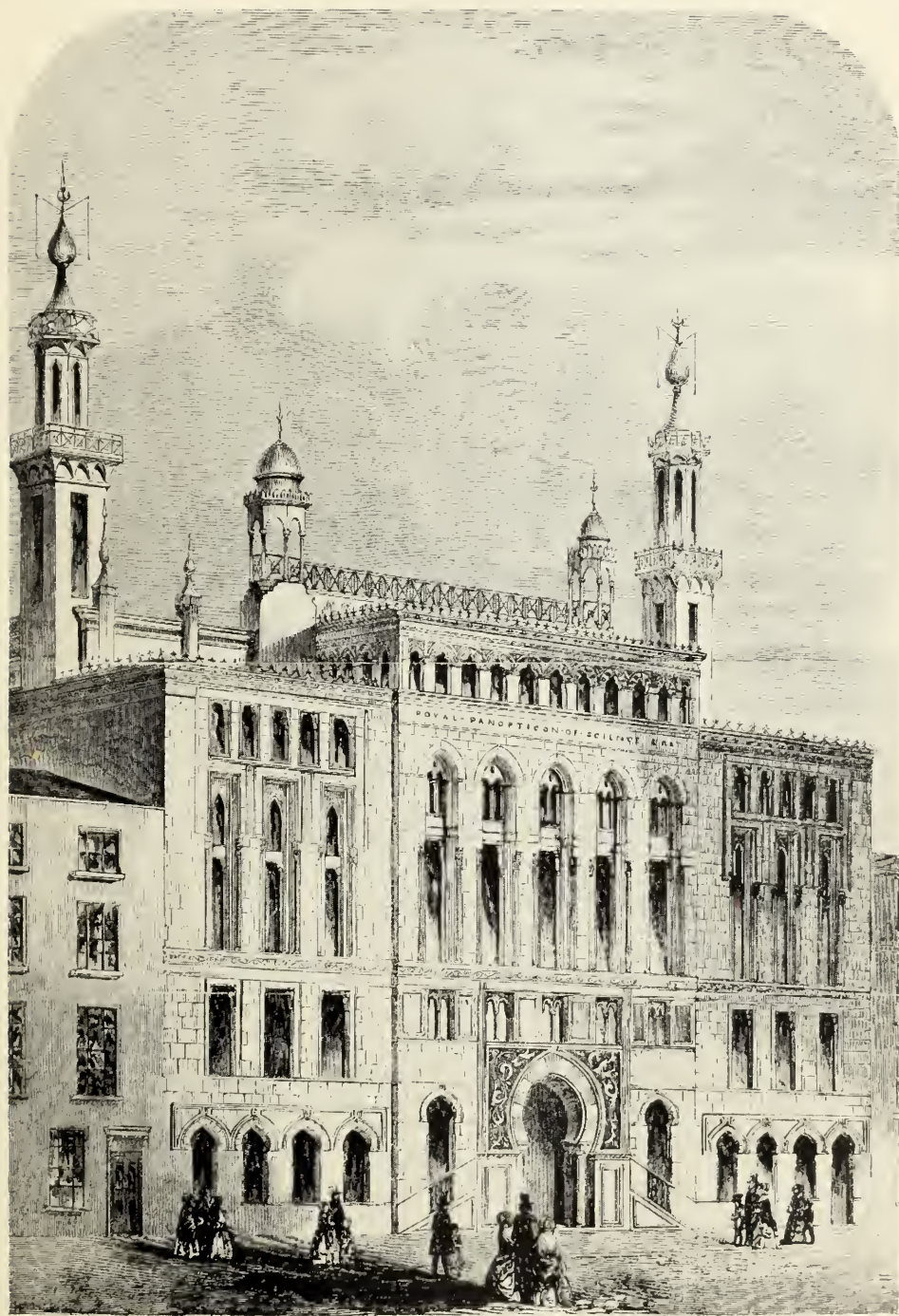
Not long ago the Alhambra might have commemorated its jubilee; for it had a music hall licence years earlier than some slipshod historians seem to know of; and indeed runs the Canterbury very close for seniority. Projected as the Panopticon, in more or less friendly rivalry with the

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Polytechnic, it was incorporated by Royal Charter, and opened with prayer. "While the eye is gratified with an exhibition of every startling novelty which science and the fine arts can produce, and the ear is enchanted with soul-stirring music, the mind," said the prospectus, "shall have food of the most invigorating character."

Alas ! the Panopticon soon found its way into bankruptcy, Its scientific toys were scattered from an auction-room ; and the enterprising E. T. Smith turned the splendid Moorish structure into a music hall. He did not long endure—but he distinguished his term by exhibiting the prize-fighters, Sayers and Heenan, still scarred by their historic battle at Farningham. Amid a scene of wild enthusiasm, they were presented with tokens of the occasion. Smith had meant to utilise the Royal Opera House, of which also he was the lessee and manager, for this interlude ; but allowed friends with a keener sense of propriety to dissuade him.

A Mr Wilde ran the Alhambra, indiscriminately as a music hall and as a circus. Under his management Leotard, the famous aerial performer, made his first appearance in London, to eventually receive a salary of one hundred and eighty pounds a week. None is so apt to play the part of *Laudator temporis acti* as the circus veteran. And he is never so firm as in the assertion that Leotard's grace and daring have not been equalled, even by "Little Bob" Hanlon, whose ease and skill are but an experience of yesterday. Leotard was trained to the trapeze in childhood at Toulouse by his father. He followed his dangerous trade immune from accident, and went home to die, quite young, of small-pox. Incidentally, he established an interesting precedent,



THE PANOPTICON: PREDECESSOR OF THE ALHAMBRA

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in the way of artists' salaries. Giovanelli, the proprietor of Highbury Barn, demurred to Leotard's demands, but jumped at the artist's suggestion that he should receive one half-penny per head of the attendance. The manager had cause to repent his bargain, for the salary first quoted was much less than the aggregation of the capitation fee. Roughly, fifty thousand people yield a hundred pounds. The fact that Leotard died in his bed leads me to remark that the authenticated instances of fatal accidents to "sensational" performers are singularly few; and have mostly been due to carelessness, to the slovenly fixing of apparatus, or to incompetence. There is the case of gymnastic partners, one of whom hung by his feet from a lofty trapeze, holding in his teeth a gag attached to a swivel, which carried his partner by the belt. The lower man, in a horizontal position, face downwards, swung round and round, but became so indifferent to his circumstances that his eye wandered over the hall. "Bill," he said to his bearer, "your girl's here." As thoughtlessly, Bill said: "Where?" and, as he opened his mouth, lost hold of the gag, precipitating his unhappy comrade many feet to the earth!

Think of Blondin, another of the Alhambra *alumni*—though his more brilliant feats were at the Crystal Palace. The old man died peacefully in his bed at seventy-six, having followed his hazardous calling from his fourth year. But he refused to regard it as hazardous. "A net is a very proper precaution," he agreed with me one day, "*—pour les autres.*" He declared that a net would make him nervous. Blondin, no doubt, had a supernatural sense of balance. He also had the forearm of a giant, which enabled him to manipulate a balance pole of immense weight and utility. On the ground

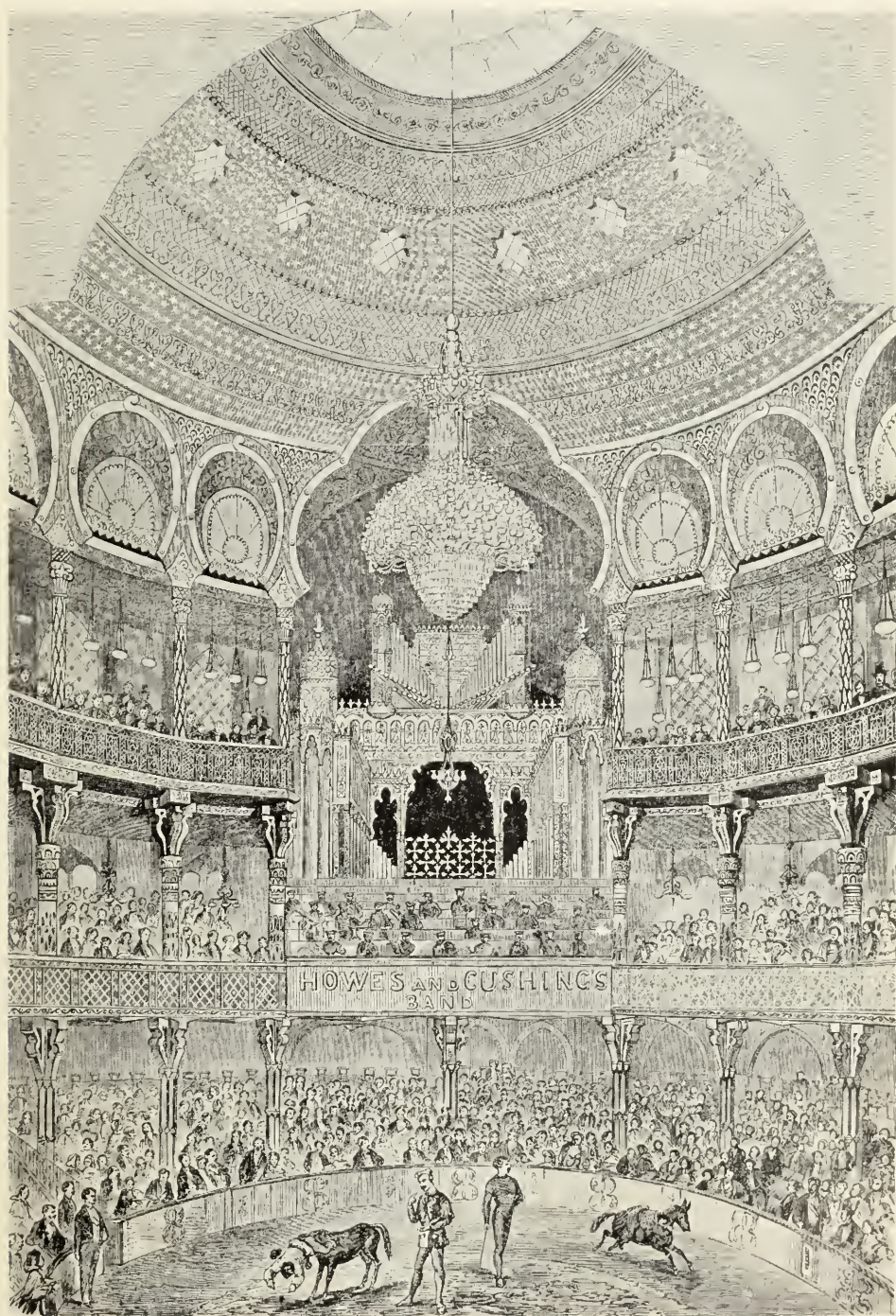
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he was unimposing, and ungraceful in his walk. Suffering agony from rheumatism, he one day looked affectionately at a rope stretched across his garden at Ealing—where he kept rabbits, experimented in sweet-peas, and what not—and assured me he would never be well till he could get “up there,” being then seventy odd. He performed within a few months of his death.

Frederick Strange was Wilde's successor at the Alhambra, in which he is said to have invested a fortune made as a refreshment contractor at the Crystal Palace, which is quite true ; but, like Morton, he was a waiter first. Two more of the men destined to play a great part in the development of the modern music hall were publicans' cellarmen ; and two more were policemen.

Strange was disposed to make ballet a popular feature of the Alhambra programme, and this speedily involved him in a quarrel with the theatrical managers, who sought to get his first spectacular production, *L'Enfant Prodigue*, founded on Auber's opera, condemned as a stage play. Strange won the day, but failed to get a really useful judgment ; and, after an interval of forty years, the still unsatisfactory state of the law permitted similar prosecutions against the Alhambra and the Empire in 1905. During a part of Strange's management John Hollingshead, as stage manager, got his first practical experience of theatrical life ; and may also have got the idea of the Corinthian Club from the very convivial gatherings in the Alhambra canteen. He found a humorous relaxation in writing articles for *Good Words* as he sat in his office of observation, adjacent to the stage.

Strange turned his enterprise into a limited liability company—the first of note in the history of popular entertainment.



HOWES AND CUSHING'S AMERICAN CIRCUS : AT THE ALHAMBRA

ROUND LEICESTER SQUARE

The prosperity of the house was checked by the loss of its music hall licence in 1870. This was not restored till 1884. Meanwhile, the directorate exploited a theatrical entertainment—comic opera with incidental ballets, of which M. Jacobi, a refugee at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, supplied more than a hundred during his reign as *chef d'orchestre*. In the autumn of 1870 the Alhambra was the scene of nightly demonstrations by French and Germans, for which the management generously provided a musical accompaniment of national airs; and later there was counter-rioting on account of two favourite actresses, Kate Santley and Rose Bell.

Touching the site of Leicester House, the “Pouting place of princes,” the Empire mainly occupies that of Saville House, where Peter the Great may have drunk his strange mixture of brandy and pepper, and from the steps of which George III. was proclaimed King. When Saville House—say, rather, the ensuing Eldorado Music Hall of evil fame—was destroyed by fire, two young bloods drove up with the firemen. They became the Duke of Sutherland and King Edward VII. In years to come, other young bloods demolished a partition erected by order of the County Council, and marched down Piccadilly bearing fragments of the wreck, headed by Mr Winston Churchill, not yet, of course, Right Honourable.

After the Saville House fire a panorama was projected, and the Empire of to-day follows its circular line. But the panorama came to naught. There was an Alcazar scheme, and a Pandora scheme. “Empire” was the inspiration of Mr H. J. Hitchins, manager from the opening of the house, in 1884, to the day of his death. He was the nominee of

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Nichol, of the Café Royal, the original leaseholder and dominant shareholder of the Empire. For years that grim old man, sitting in his box, and rolling a semi-paternal eye over the ballet, formed a familiar picture.

At first the Empire was devoted to opera. *Chilperic* was the first production, with a cast including Herbert Standing, Paulus, Walter Wardroper, Harry Paulton, Camille D'Arville, Agnes Consuelo, Sallie Turner, Madge Shirley, and Sismondi. Hayden Coffin joined the company as a chorister.

But opera and extravaganza failed to attract; ballet became the staple fare, with a liberal supplement of music hall "turns." The Empire grew world-famous, and its shareholders divided profits at the rate of sixty per cent.—on a small capital, it should always be remembered. It was probably the first music hall to which Royalty, in the persons of King Edward and Queen Alexandra, resorted in a casual and friendly way. It was the scene of a Lucullan entertainment, given by the Sassoons to the Shah of Persia. It was the first hall to which a famous actress of the regular theatre, Amy Roselle, came, with recitations. It was the first hall toward which Sims Reeves unbent. It was the battleground of the Nonconformist party apropos its promenade, inspiring Clement Scott to pen his diatribe, *Prudes on the Prowl*.

Amy Roselle took her engagement very seriously, also a thirty-pound salary; and received the interviewing reporter with effusion. She professed to believe that she was doing missionary work—"elevating" the naughty halls. The truth was that the directors of the Empire were in mortal terror of their licence at that time, and made frantic efforts

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to secure any pallid star, for citation to the authorities. The habitual attendants at the Empire were bored stiff by Madam Roselle's recitations.

Poor, poor Amy Roselle ! She was shot, fully acquiescing, by her husband, Arthur Dacre, who immediately cut his throat, in Sydney. Refusing to recognise the fact that their charm and popularity had waned, they stubbornly continued in importance, till starvation stared them in the face ; and then staggered the world by their protest against its declining appreciation.

Mrs Ormiston Chant headed the "purity" campaign against the Empire, and naturally came in for a good deal of abuse, and more cheap satire. She overstated her case, and exaggerated her evidence, of course. But George Edwardes, though naturally he would not admit her contentions, knew that she was sincere, and immensely able. I heard him offer her a fine engagement, as a sequel to their fight. She had a secret sympathiser in Augustus Harris, who had retired in anger from the board of the Empire ; and was again disappointed when he found he could not make the Palace its effective rival. Music hall management was not his *métier*.

He sought revenge in the melodrama, *A Life of Pleasure*, which he produced about that time. One of the scenes was enacted in the Empire promenade, the naughty lady of the episode drenching the villain with champagne. Pettitt, the author, was well aware that Harris meant to be vicious toward the Empire. But the curious feature of the situation was that the actress was Mrs Bernard Beere, who, as Fanny Whitehead, presided in her girlhood over a glove stall on the first circle of the Alhambra, and had doubtless assisted

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at many scenes such as she was now called upon to enact.

It is a ghastly reflection that George Scott and Charles Dundas Slater, acting managers respectively of the Alhambra and the Empire, two pleasant and popular men, both blew out their brains.

CHAPTER XIII

SINGERS WHO ARE SILENT

The first "Great" Men of the Music Hall—Lions Comique—Music Hall Morals and Manners—Saved by a Song

FEW and short are the records of the early music hall ; and so the would-be historian seizes every fragment. Not long before his death, well advanced in the eighties, Joe Cave, manager, actor, author, and pioneer of minstrelsy, whose chief pride it was to have been the first English banjo player, carefully "made up" as W. G. Ross did to sing *Sam Hall*, and warbled that weird ditty for the instruction of a party of his friends. It was an interesting experience. Still living is a member of one of Morton's early companies at the Canterbury, William Lingard. He was acting, at any rate a few months ago, with one of the companies proceeding from the Shaftesbury Theatre. Lingard used to do impersonations of celebrities, with songs, a form of entertainment which again became popular a while ago. He married a pretty girl in the company, Alice Dunning, and they went to America, to return as Miss Lingard, a charming emotional actress in the eighties, and as Horace Lingard, an important impresario of comic opera. He must be the last link between the old music hall and the new.

Mackney, the negro-impersonator, sedulously cultivated a public alternative to that of the music hall. He organised concert parties, and was often included in St James's Hall

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programmes—musical, not minstrel. He saved a good deal of money, though he lost some of it in unfortunate speculation. Still he was able to “husband out life’s taper” in great happiness at Enfield, where he cultivated show roses. It seemed incredible that the weather-beaten old gardener, with a shock of white hair, expatiating on Maréchal Niels and Gloires di Dijon could be the original exponent of :

“ I wish I was with Nancy
In a second floor, for ever more
I’d live and die with Nancy
In the Strand, in the Strand, in the Strand ! ”

—and of :

“ Oh, lor ! gals, I wish I’d lots of money.
Charlestown is a mighty place,
The folks they are so funny
And they all are bound to go the whole hog or none.”

Mackney may be forgiven a spice of malice in the chuckle with which he read of Sims Reeves’s decision to take to the music hall stage, in his decline ; for the great tenor had once peremptorily declined to appear on the same programme with him.

Whether the “ Great ” Alfred Vance or the “ Great ” Arthur Lloyd first appeared upon the horizon of London I do not know—Vance, probably. He was a lawyer’s clerk, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, then a provincial actor, Alfred Peck Stevens being, actually, his name. In a long-ago pantomime at the St James’s Theatre he played clown. All this experience stood him in good stead when he took to the variety stage. The “ vocal comedians ” of that time adopted crude expedients of make-up and costume. Vance—my authority

SINGERS WHO ARE SILENT

is the late Hugh Jay Didcott—was always *cap à pied*. He preceded, and succeeded, Leybourne, of whom, for a long time, he was the rival. Leybourne struck a note with *Champagne Charley*. Vance responded with *Clicquot, Clicquot, that's the Wine for me*. And so they ran through the card, with : *Moet and Chandon's the Wine for me ; Cool Burgundy Ben ; Sparkling Moselle*.

Vance was first with the stage portrait of the “swell of the period”—fair hair, eye-glass, “faultless evening dress”—which has imitators to this day. But he had versatility. He was the first coster singer, with his *Chickaleary Bloke*. He could sing a moral, “motto” song with effect, *Act on the Square, Boys ; act on the Square*. Of course his name is inseparable from *Slap Bang*. He declined in popularity, and his death occurred at a hall he would hardly have considered in his great day, the Sun, Knightsbridge. In a barrister's wig and gown he sang a topical song, with the refrain, uttered as an appeal to the gallery, “Are you guilty ?” He fell unconscious on the stage. A troupe of singers and dancers tripped lightly over his body, and carried on the show. A scene, quickly lowered, divided them from a dead man.

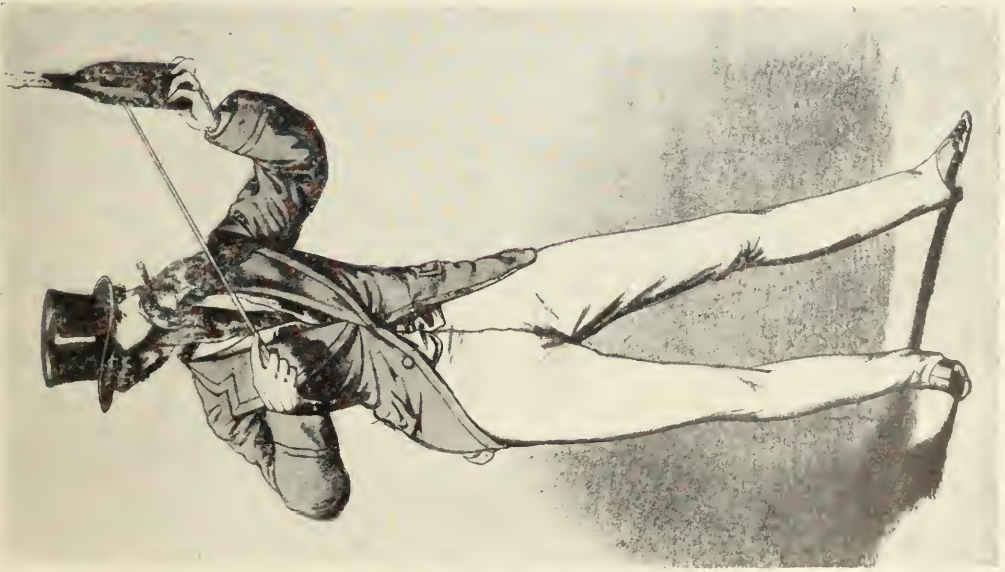
Arthur Lloyd lived to earn the description, “last of the lion comiques.” He was a Scotsman—rather a dull heavy man in social intercourse. His father was for years the favourite comedian of Edinburgh—an actor after the old Compton style, with a quince-like flavour of humour. The fact that this proud position never brought him in more than five pounds a week induced his son to take to the music halls, where I suppose the younger man soon ranked as a hundred-a-week man. He had a knack of song-writing, and published not fewer than two hundred songs, all of a considerable

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popularity, Arthur Lloyd had a passion for managing theatres, which generally failed, and a tremendous sense of his responsibility to a vast number of relations. The result was a life never free from money troubles in spite of his earnings.

Of Leybourne I have spoken elsewhere. Another of this group was "Jolly John" Nash, a midland counties iron-master whose jovial songs had been in great demand at Masonic gatherings in the day of his prosperity, and who bravely entered professional life when ruin overtook him. Nash was one of the first music hall singers commanded to appear before Royalty. But of that anon.

In succession to Arthur Lloyd and George Leybourne at the London Pavilion came G. H. Macdermott, the immortal singer of *We Don't Want to Fight*. Macdermott was a person of humble origin, Farrell by name—a bricklayer's labourer at the outset. He served in the Navy, and left an A.B. Success as an amateur actor on board ship induced him to try the regular stage, and for years as Gilbert Hastings he was a popular favourite at the Grecian Theatre. It was his pride to have there forestalled Irving as Becket, in a play—I believe of his own writing, for he developed the literary knack—called *Fair Rosamund*. Macdermott's migration to the variety stage, where for years he earned an immense income, was brought about by accident. Henry Pettitt, a young schoolmaster serving his noviciate as a dramatist at the Grecian Theatre, gave Macdermott a song with the refrain, "If ever there was a damned scamp," with which the actor procured an engagement at the London Pavilion, meant in the first instance to fill up a holiday. But the holiday continued indefinitely. *The Scamp* became the talk of the



GEORGE LEYBOURNE:
"CHAMPAGNE CHARLEY"



ARTHUR LLOYD:
"THE GERMAN BAND"

SINGERS WHO ARE SILENT

town, and incidentally drew from the headmaster of the North London Collegiate School a hint to his junior master that playwriting was clearly his vocation—not pedagogy. Pettitt took the hint, wrote a hundred melodramas, but died in the prime of manhood, leaving fifty thousand pounds.

Macdermott had a commanding, as the years advanced rather brutal, presence. He had the rare gift of articulation, singing so clearly and sonorously that never a word escaped the most distantly located member of the audience. He had free views as to the quality of song that might be sung in a music hall. The directors of the London Pavilion—not then by any means particular persons—had other views, and effectually excluded the once idolised singer from the West End variety stage.

The speech in which their chairman summed up, at the judicial meeting, laid down in clear language the point in suggestiveness which he thought a vocal comedian might safely and properly reach, enumerated the matters on which he thought the freest humour should not play in public, and gave precise meanings to Macdermott's double meanings. As a *vade mecum* of music hall art and morality this deliverance would have been invaluable, and in lists of "rare and curious books" it would have been thrice starred. But, naturally, it did not achieve verbal record.

Macdermott bought a series of halls at the East End, and prospered to his death. His second wife, Miss Annie Millburn, was, it is interesting to recall, a mimic of almost uncanny skill, before Miss Cecilia Loftus was thought of. To the end of his days Macdermott cherished a grievance. He felt that he had done the state an immense service by the exploitation of *We Don't Want to Fight*. Perhaps he had.

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But he complained that it was never "recognised." What form he expected the recognition to take I know not. He believed that Disraeli and Montagu Corri once visited the London Pavilion and heard his song from a box. But he had not clear proof even of this. Sam Collins, *né* Vagg, was a singer of Irish songs, of a lost type. He wore a caubeen, green dress-coat, drab breeches, worsted stockings and brogues, carried a shillelagh and a bundle and warbled *The Rocky Road to Dublin*. He began life as a chimney-sweep, and ended it as owner of the Islington Music Hall, which still bears his name.

Old-timers speak kindly of the charm of Georgina Smithson, Louie Sherrington and Annie Adams, serio-comic singers. But I have no more precise information. Nelly Power had rare fascination, and West End managers eagerly tempted her to burlesque. She had a curious experience of fortune. It seemed that she had passed her zenith, and was steadily making downward. Then Mr E. V. Page, a city accountant with a wonderful facility in comic song writing, provided her with :

“ He wore a penny flower in his coat,
 La-di-da !
A penny paper collar round his throat,
 La-di-da !
In his hand a penny stick,
In his teeth a penny pick,
And a penny in his pocket,
 La-di-da ! ”

The St Martin's Summer of Nelly Power's prosperity due to this song was probably the best time of her life.

CHAPTER XIV

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SONG

The Ditties of Demos—*Slap Bang, here we are again*—The Tichborne Claimant—"Motto" Songs

WHEN one is writing of songs it is proper to recall "that very old man" known to Fletcher of Saltoun—slipshod citation says it was Fletcher himself—who cared not to make the laws of a people so long as he might be its bard. Time has given us more exact means of comparing the cash worth of each occupation. And Fletcher's friend, though his spirit was that of pure patriotism, might prove to have chosen the more profitable employment, for a song that really grips the popular imagination has the making of a fortune.

Not for me is it to discuss the ditties of Demos from a critical standpoint. This I will maintain—the composition of the music hall song is a very definite form of art, and when, on occasion, a person of literary distinction has made an incursion to the field with a song he has conceived to be of an "elevating" tendency, he has mostly failed. To quote one of his own favourites, the patron of the music hall "wants what he wants."

Song publication on modern lines began seriously with that of *Not for Joe*. Its sale of eighty thousand copies established, and long held, a record. Probably most of the profits went into the pockets of the publisher. It was many

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years ere the lyrist and composer appreciated the potentialities of a royalty. Song popularity is measured in millions now. Arthur Lloyd, the composer and expositor of *Not for Joe*, travelled townwards from his suburban home on an omnibus driven by the original Joe, a London character whose habitual negation was "No, thankee—not for Joe." So simple is the history of songs that have moved the world !

"Not for Joe" was for years the pet phrase of the Londoner, ho has often been indebted in that way to the music hall.

Where did you get that hat," "Let 'em all come !" "Get your 'air cut," "Ask a pleeceman," and "There's 'air" will occur to the veteran Cockney. "There he goes with his eye out," the special satire coined for the early volunteers, never claimed relationship with a lyric.

Arthur Lloyd was already famous when he wrote *Not for Joe*. His diploma ditty was *The German Band* :

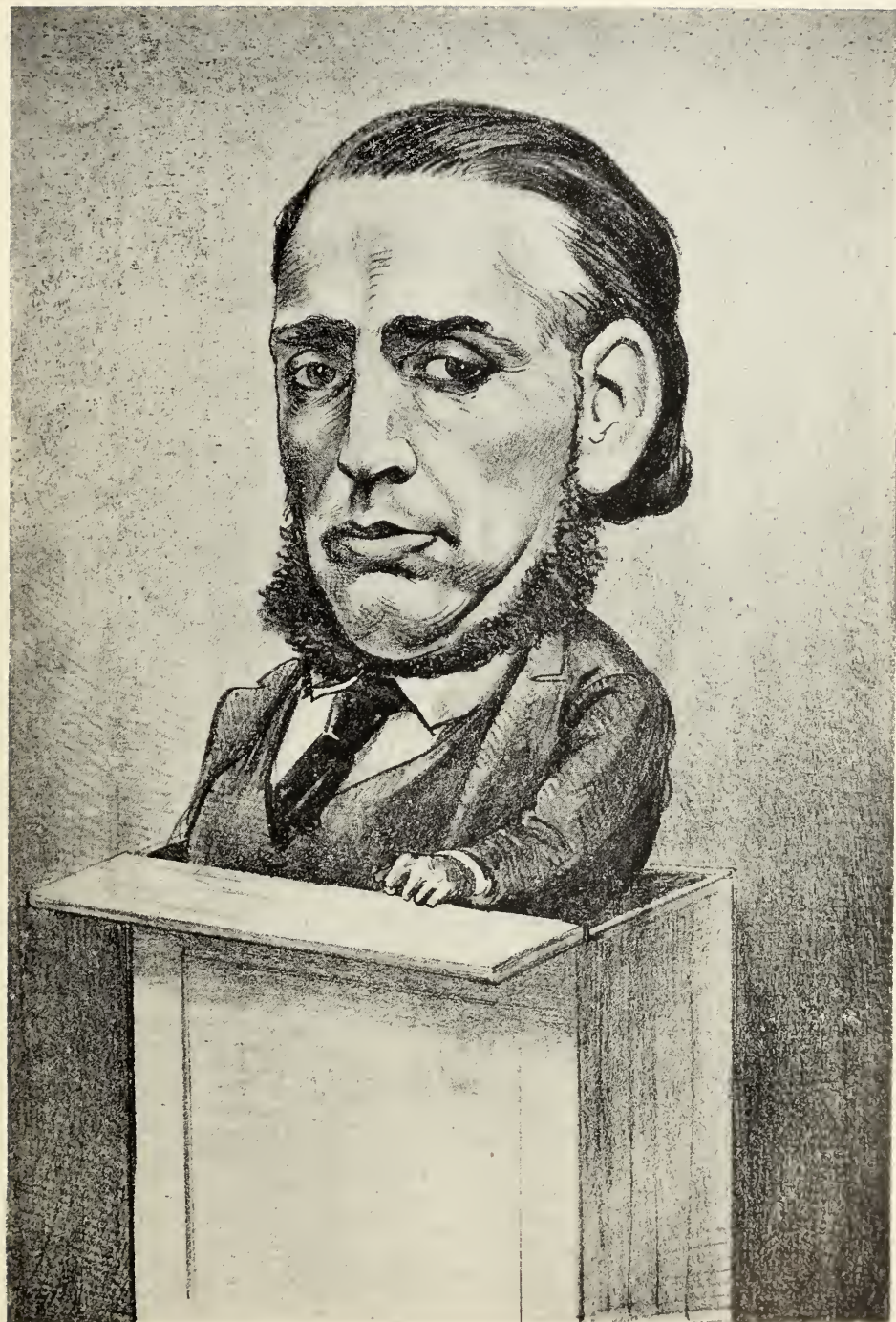
"I loved her, and she might have been
The happiest in the land.
But she fancied a foreigner who played a flageolet
In the middle of a German band."

Lloyd sang a Japanese nonsense song with which the toppers of the time were wont to test their sobriety :

"Pollywollyamo, nogo, soki,
Pollywo-a-lumpa shoes two tees,
Slopy in the eye ; flat-nosed beauty,
Pollywollywolly ! Jolly Japanese."

Vance is best remembered by :

"Slap bang, here we are again, here we are again ;
Slap bang, here we are again—and
We always are so jolly, so jolly,
Yes, we always are so jolly,
As jolly as can be."



ARTHUR ORTON : THE "TICHBORNE CLAIMANT"

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SONG

A verse of his coster song is interesting, if only as an example of the strange mutation of London slang. It is incomprehensible, now, to any other than an "earnest student" of argot :

" I'm a chickaleary bloke, vith my von, two, three:
Vitechapel vas the village I vos born in.
For to get me on the hop,
Or on my tibby drop,
You've got to get up early in the mornin'."

Casual writers overlook the fact that there was a changing chorus to Pettitt's *Scamp* song.

" If ever there was a damned scamp,
I flatter myself I am he.
From William the Norman to Brigham the Mormon,
They can't hold a candle to me "

is obvious. But modern readers may be baffled by the reference of

" From Roger to Odger—the artful old dodger—
They can't hold a candle to me."

Roger is Arthur Orton, otherwise Sir Roger Tichborne, the " Claimant," who himself lived to become a music hall artist, lecturing on his wrongs, when he had completed his sentence of fourteen years—as to seven years for fraud and as to seven years for perjury. Odger is George Odger, would-be working man Member of Parliament. One night Odger's son hissed the singer, and promoted a disturbance which brought him up at Bow Street ; but the magistrate held that the defendant was justified and dismissed him. This after his counsel had said : " It is an insult to patrons of the theatre

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to compare them with the patrons of the music hall. If the latter were closed a great service would be done to the State, for they are the bane of modern London—corrupting and debasing youth and creating a distaste for all intellectual pastime.”

Macdermott's later song :

“ We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men,
We've got the money too.
We've fought the Bear before, and
While Britons still are true
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.”

No song, I will not even except *Tipperary*, had an experience so remarkable. *We Don't Want to Fight* was translated into every language employing the printing press. It was mentioned in Parliament. It was quoted in a *Times* leader. It provided *Punch* with cartoon after cartoon. Learned men engaged in controversy as to the origin and meaning of the word, “Jingo,” which, anyway, acquired and still has an exact significance as describing politicians of a certain temperament and method.

We Don't Want to Fight was written and composed by G. W. Hunt, a little man with a flamboyant moustache, who had been manager of the Cambridge Music Hall. Hunt more often than otherwise composed the music of his songs too. He would borrow a hint from a popular waltz, or even from a Lutheran hymn—just as, in later years, a prolific composer of music hall songs betrays to the expert his intimate knowledge of Jewish melody. Hunt had a nose for the topical, as he proved in *We Don't Want to Fight*, which he dashed off after a perusal of his morning paper, disturbing Macdermott

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SONG

in his second sleep, or maybe his first, for he was a convivial creature, in order to strum the tune.

Hunt was especially the lyrist for George Leybourne, for whom he wrote fifty songs—but not *Champagne Charley*. That was the work of one Alfred Lee, who, when he came to town with the manuscript, had to search the remote corners of his pocket to produce the toll then demanded of every passenger across Waterloo Bridge, and felt his heart sink to his boots while Sheard the publisher very slowly made up his mind to advance twenty pounds on the deal. Elderly folk will catch, again, the topical references of such songs as *Walking in the Zoo*, *The Flying Trapeze*, *Zazel! Zazel! Up in a Balloon*, *Riding on a Donkey*—all Hunt's contributions to the Leybourne repertory. His *Captain Cuff*, designed as a companion study to *Champagne Charley*, failed to secure an equal popularity, but had a considerable vogue :

“ Some coons go in for whiskers, some
For most unpleasant dogs,
Some fellows have a weakness for
The most outrageous togs.
I'm very strong on linen—yes,
And wouldn't give a dollar
For life without a splendid show
Of snow-white cuff and collar.”¹

(*Spoken*) “ Which has earned for me the title of :

“ Captain Cuff, Captain Cuff, you can tell me by my collar.
Captain Cuff, Captain Cuff, though I'm not worth half a dollar,
I'm awfully stiff in style, as my cigarette I puff,
They cry, ‘ Hi ! clear the way, here comes Captain Cuff.’ ”²

Another singer of the Cockney-Horatian school was Harry Rickards—a mechanic again, from Woolwich, who was

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famous for *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*; still more for :

“ Cerulea was beautiful,
Cerulea was fair,
She lived with her gran'ma
In Gooseberry Square.
She was once my unkydoodleum,
But now, alas, she
Plays kissy-kissy with an officer
In the artiller-ee.”

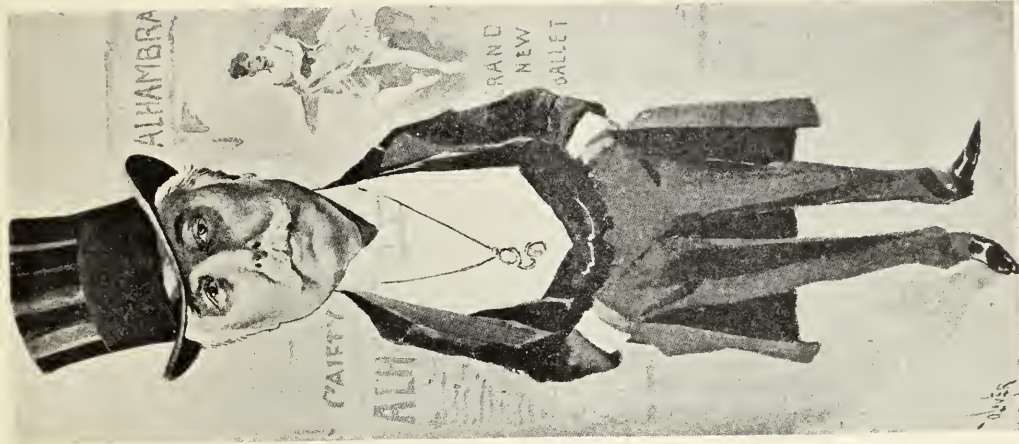
Rickards got into apparently inextricable difficulties, and went to Australia in a hurry. There the music hall was unknown. Beginning in a small way, he added palace to palace, and, lately died, on the way to a millionaire.

Godfrey was good at the “ Hi-tiddly-hi-ti-ti ” business, but there was the “ heavy man ” of the old school in him still, and he was at his best with such songs as *On the Bridge at Midnight* :

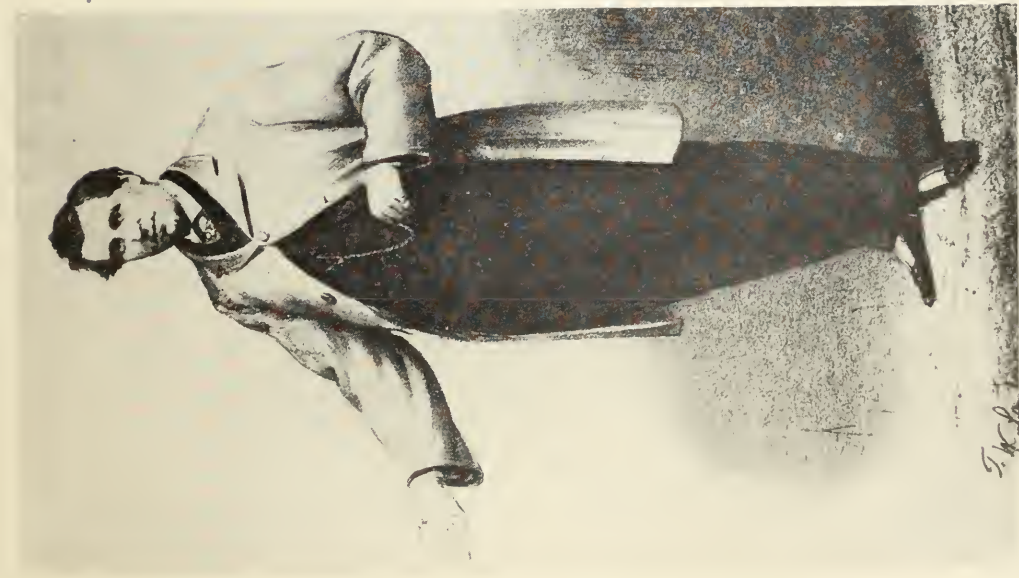
“ Next a form approaches at a halting pace,
Grief had failed to shatter the beauty of her face.
Promises and falsehoods fondly she believed ;
Now her dream is ended—forsaken and deceived,
Silently to Heaven she offers up a prayer,
Gazes at the river, then shudders in despair.
Clutching some love token in her withered hands,
Like an apparition on the brink she stands.

‘ Why did he forsake me,
Him I loved so well ? ’
—Hark, the bell is tolling ;
Bidding earth farewell,
Frantically her hands, high
In the air she throws ;
A sigh, a leap, a scream, ’tis done ;
As o’er the bridge she goes.”

What a bright page in music hall history is that filled by



JOHN HOLLINGSHEAD



HARRY CLIFTON:
"PADDLE YOUR OWN CANOE"

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SONG

Harry Clifton. His cheery “motto” songs, faulty in form but faultless in sentiment, were mostly adapted to his friend Charles Coote’s waltzes. *Paddle your Own Canoe*, for instance, utilised the melody of *Queen of the Harvest*. To the *Innocence Waltz*, Harry Clifton sang :

“ Then do your best for one another,
Making life a pleasant dream,
Help a worn and weary brother
Pulling hard against the stream.”

Another of the genial philosopher’s songs was *Wait for the Turn of the Tide* :

“ Then try to be happy and gay, my boys,
Remember the world is wide,
And Rome wasn’t built in a day, my boys,
So wait for the turn of the tide.”

Herbert Campbell’s fat, confidential way lent itself to a topical song with the refrain :

“ They’re all very fine and large,
They’re fat, they’re sound and prime,
If you fancy you can beat ’em,
It will take you all your time.
They’re the widest in creation,
And I make no extra charge,
Now who’ll have a chance for a dozen or two,
They’re all very fine and large.”

CHAPTER XV

BALLETS AND BALLET DANCERS

The Cancan at the Alhambra—Police Interference—Some Old-time Favourites—Genée's Arrival—Kate Vaughan and the Gaiety School—Booming Maud Allan

THERE is no brighter gem in the crown of the music hall than the ballet, which it rescued from the neglect of the opera house, and sedulously nurtured. Ballet during the earlier half of the nineteenth century was an adjunct of the opera, often, indeed, the more important constituent of the programme. But *Le Corsair*, in which Rosati danced during the season of 1858, was the last of the great opera ballets, and dancing bade fair to become a lost art till the expanding variety theatre offered it an asylum. At the Canterbury Music Hall, at the Metropolitan and at the South London large *corps de ballet* were maintained.

When Strange became manager of the Alhambra an Oriental ballet, founded on Auber's opera, *Azael*, and entitled *L'Enfant Prodigue*, was his first production of importance. A little Hungarian ballet had among its exponents the brothers Imre and Bolossy Kiraefy, destined to become famous *metteurs en scène* and company promoters, and their sister Anita. The legitimate theatres developed a furious jealousy of the Alhambra and invoked the law. But the Alhambra wrought its own undoing. In the late summer of 1870 a ballet called *Les Nations* was produced. The

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theatre had just previously lost its popular *première danseuse* of several seasons, Pitteri, a beautiful Venetian, who died in poverty, and by way of giving éclat to the new ballet, Mademoiselle Colonna was engaged to head a Parisian quadrille, in fact the cancan, a performance of which the Prince and Princess of Wales had previously contemplated at the Lyceum without complaint or hurt. Colonna and her friends footed it merrily for five weeks at the Alhambra. It was an unfortunate coincidence that at the end of that time the Alhambra had to apply for a renewal of its licence, which, without a word of warning, and after very little discussion, was withheld !

A series of promenade concerts was instantly inaugurated. The Franco-German War was then at its fiercest encounters, and there were nightly scenes at the Alhambra far more dangerous to the public *morale*, one thinks, than the cancan could have been. M. Riviere's band played *The Watch on the Rhine*, and the Germans roared approval ; it proceeded to the *Marseillaise*, and the French counter-demonstrated. Meanwhile Colonna and her party proceeded to the Globe Theatre, and in *The White Cat* burlesque danced their "Parisian quadrille" to admiration and without interruption. The directors of the Alhambra proceeded to the Lord Chamberlain, who complacently accorded them his licence. They swept away the tables which, covering the vast floor space, had accommodated convivial groups, and opened the Alhambra as a theatre. For fourteen years thereafter this was the home of comic opera, with interpolated or auxiliary ballet. But dividends at the rate of twenty-five per cent. ceased. Such works as *Le Roi Carotte*, *The Black Crook*, *La Belle Helene*, *Don Juan*—an extravaganza by H. J.

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Byron, not to be confounded with other versions, memorable for nightly demonstrations, which became a public scandal, by the friends respectively of Kate Santley and Rose Bell—*La Jolie Parfumeuse*, *Whittington*, *Spectresheim*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Orphée aux Enfers*, *Le Fille de Madame Angot*, *The Grand Duchess*, *Fatinitza*, *La Perichole*, *La Poule aux Œufs d'Or*, *The Princess of Trebizonde*, *Rothomago*, *La Petite Mademoiselle*, *La Fille du Tambour Major*, *The Bronze Horse*, *Babil and Bijou*, *The Merry War* and *The Beggar Student*; interpreted by such artists as Kate Santley, Emily Soldene, Julia Matthews, Corneille D'Anka, Selina Dolaro and Constance Loseby.

Mostly the ballets were the compositions of M. Georges Jacobi, a German who became a naturalised Frenchman, crossed the Channel at the time of the Franco-German War and was a true Londoner to the day of his death, thirty years later. Jacobi's room at the Alhambra had the characteristics of a select delightful club. He wrote nearly a hundred ballets for the Alhambra—until, indeed, he became a convention and, rather than accommodate himself to a new order of things, resigned. But he was never happy elsewhere.

Ballets that come back to the memory of the old-time frequenter of the Alhambra are *The Enchanted Forest*, *Fretillon*; or *a Night in China*, *Cupid in Arcadia*, *The Flower Queen*, *The Fairies' Home*, *Yolande*, *The Golden Wreath*, *The Bells*, *The Carnival of Venice*, *Carmen*, *Margherita* and *Hawaya*. When, in 1884, the music hall licence was restored to the penitent, and meanwhile not too prosperous, theatre, two ballets, *The Swans* and *Melusine*, were done, and, thereafter, two each year. *Nina*, *The Bivouac*, *Dresdina*, *The*

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Seasons, Nadia, Algeria, Enchantment, Antiope, Ideala, Irena, Army and Navy, Astrea, Asmodeus, Salandra, The Sleeping Beauty, Orietta, Temptation, On the Ice, Don Juan, Aladdin, Chicago, Fidelio, Don Quixote, The Revolt of the Daughters, Sita, Ali Baba, Titania, Lochinvar, Bluebeard, Donnybrook, Tzigane, Beauty and the Beast, Victoria and Merry England, Jack Ashore, The Red Sleeves, A Day Off, Soldiers of the Queen, The Handy Man, The Gay City, Grctna Green, Britannia's Realm, The Devil's Forge, Carmen, All the Year Round, Entente Cordiale, My Lady Nicotine, Parisiana, L'Amour, The Queen of Spades, Les Cloches de Corneville, Sal-oh-my, The Two Flags, Paquita, On the Square, Pysche, On the Heath, Our Flag, Femina, On the Sands, The Dance Dream, 1830, and The Guide to Paris employed such dancers as Pertoldi, who married Tito Mattei the composer, Palladino, still living, the wife of a well-known member of the Eccentric Club, and Vincenti (a wonderful pirouettist). For many years the *maître du ballet*, M. Coppi, also supervised a useful school.

In 1887 the Alhambra, for the first time during many years, had a serious rival. Then, the Empire definitely became a variety theatre, and in its first programmes as such included two ballets, initiating a policy, long followed, of a ballet on academic lines, *Dilara*, and one of a topical character, *Sports of England*. There succeeded : *Rose D'Amour, Diana, Robert Macaire, The Bal Masque, Cleopatra, The Paris Exhibition, The Dream of Wealth, Cecile, Dolly, Orfeo, By the Sea, Nisita, Versailles, Round the Town, Katrina, The Girl I Left Behind Me, La Frolique, On Brighton Pier, Faust, La Danse, Monte Christo, Under One Flag, The Press, Our River, Alaska, Ordered to the Front, Sea-side, Les Papillons, Old China, Our Crown, The Milliner Duchess, Vineland,*

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High Jinks, The Dancing Doll, The Bugle Call, Cinderella, Coppelia, The Debutante, Sir Roger de Coverley, and The Belle of the Ball.

Katti Lanner, nominally the *maîtresse de ballet*, was actually the autocrat of the Empire stage for many years—though M. Wilhelm, a very English gentleman, in spite of the name he assumed, contrived to vindicate his position as the genius of design. Lanner was a Viennese, of considerable celebrity as a dancer on the Continent when Mapleson brought her to London. For fifteen years she danced, but more and more devoted herself to “production.” She founded a school, and in fact its pupils formed the nucleus of the Empire ballet. She was an excellent teacher, liked by her pupils—but the indenture of apprenticeship which bound them to her, if it erred on either side in generosity, certainly did not select the apprentice for its aberration. Dancers of the rank and file are shamefully ill paid.

Lanner's appearance before the curtain was the consummation of a “first night” at the Empire. Her huge body encased in black silk, gold chains about her neck, her head surmounted by a fair wig, the nightly arrival whereof from a neighbouring hairdresser was one of the anxiously awaited moments in the life of the Empire, Lanner would smile and bow and kiss her hand, then impulsively snatch and kiss any convenient ballet-baby. And then we comfortably said “All's well” and went home.

Genée arrived at the Empire, also by way of Vienna, in 1897. In spite of her French name, she is a Dane—Miss Petersen, from Copenhagen. This consummate little artist stayed contentedly at the Empire for fifteen years. London got to love her very dearly, and yet I do not believe it had

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any idea what a treasure it possessed till American enterprise tempted her with an increase of salary—say, ten times the Empire's extreme figure.

Almost as essential to academic ballet as the *première danseuse* is the mime-lover. For years, Malvina Cavalazzi was the handsome hero of the Empire ballets. She had been a dancer and travelled the world over. I think her last appearance in this capacity was in *Excelsior* at His Majesty's.

Meanwhile the Gaiety had done its share in the cult of dancing. Kate Vaughan, the English dancer most appellant to the imagination, was a product of the music hall. Carefully trained in the Italian style at Islington, she danced at Cremorne and round the variety theatres ere she caught the eye of John Hollingshead ; and as a music hall artist made her first appearance at the Gaiety on Ash Wednesday, 1872, when he put up a variety entertainment by way of a protest against the old law which forbade a theatrical performance on that day. When Miss Vaughan left the Gaiety to become a serious actress, the critics were hardly just to her, for she was a notably fine Lady Teazle, and Peggy in *The Country Girl*. She returned to her old love for the extra decoration of *Excelsior* at His Majesty's. I believe Charles Hawtrey contrived to lose a considerable part of the fortune he made out of *The Private Secretary* on the reproduction here of the famous Italian ballet. Miss Vaughan introduced a solo, for which she received seventy pounds a week ; and the newspapers made wonderful computations as to the pounds per minute she received for her brief occupation of the stage. Ten times seventy pounds falls short of Pavlova's fee, on occasion.

Kate Vaughan's colleague at the Gaiety, Connie Gilchrist, was a skipping-rope dancer from the music halls, as her

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predecessor, Rose Fox (the mother of Maude Darrell), was ; and her successor, Sylvia Grey. Letty Lind, Topsy Sinden, Katie Seymour and Alice Lethbridge complete the Gaiety group.

In the early nineties Loie Fuller created a mild sensation, and raised a crop of imitators, by a so-called serpentine dance which she claimed to have invented, but which the erudite Mr Sala traced to Emma Hart, Lady Hamilton.

It is safe to say that had Maud Allan's performance been casually introduced to the Palace programme it would have had a short shrift. Instead, it was managed with exquisite showmanship by Alfred Butt, with the assistance of the late Augustus Moore. For years Moore had professed the belief that an insidious and insistent journalist could make the London public form any opinion he chose as to the merit of a performance. He put his theories into careful practice with Maud Allan. The result was that for a year all London, high and low, swarmed to the Palace to admire and applaud an artist of whom it had never heard before and whose antecedents proved, upon investigation, to be quite curious.

Mr Butt's first step was to issue invitations to a private performance. So aristocratic an audience has never filled a music hall, save at the command of royalty, as that which filled the Palace that afternoon in 1908. What persons of such high rank had applauded, should any common creature dare criticise ?

Moore's part was the preparation of a pamphlet, insidiously circulated—and forming the basis of nine-tenths of the newspaper notices next day. Some critics ingenuously adopted its style and sentiment as their own. Some modestly placed inverted commas to choice extracts. Some

BALLETS AND BALLET DANCERS

interpolated a word or two of deprecation. But in one form or another Moore's work insinuated itself to every breakfast-table in London next day. The newspaper men had assimilated his ready-made raptures as readily as the dupe accepts the card chosen by the conjurer. And the Maud Allan boom began, and continued, as no boom did before in the history of the variety stage.

Miss Maud Allan, we were told, "is in artistic sympathy with those Latin races whose fair bodies and acute passions have brought about the greatest *crimes passionelles* which the world has ever seen. She is perfectly made, with slender wrists and ankles that speak the artist temperament. Each of her rose-tipped fingers is instinct with intention. Her skin is satin smooth, crossed only by the pale tracery of delicate veins that lace the ivory of her round bosom and slowly waving arms." In the Vision of Salome we are shown "Herodias's daughter . . . the dazzling radiance of her warm body only enhanced by the sacred fires shimmering on the ropes of pearls and plaques of jewels that enviously hide the exquisite delights of her form. . . . Her naked feet, slender and arched, beat a sensual measure. The pink pearls slip amorously about her throat and bosom as she moves, while the long strands of jewels float languorously apart from the sheen of her smooth hips. The desire that flames from her eyes and bursts in hot gusts from her scarlet mouth infect the very air with the madness of passion. Swaying like a white witch, with yearning arms and hands that plead, Maud Allan is such a delicious embodiment of lust that she might win forgiveness for the sins of such wonderful flesh. As Herod catches fire, so Salome dances even as a Bacchante, twisting her body like a silver snake

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eager for its prey panting with hot passion, the fire of her eyes scorching like a living furnace.”

Enough has been written, with more or less sincerity, on the æsthetic aspect of Maud Allan's work. Its moral aspect is not my business. She earned vast sums of money for herself and for her *entrepreneurs*. And she had a hundred imitators, who grew in daring as they retreated from grace. Here and there authority bestirred itself. But at last the public turned from classical dancing as it had turned from living statuary, in a very nausea of nakedness. Let me give Maud Allan a postscript of gratitude. She aroused a new interest in dancing—eventually, in disgraceful dancing, but the interest expanded. Men read about dancing, wrote about dancing, talked about dancing as they had not done for years. She paved the way to Petrograd and made Pavlova possible.

CHAPTER XVI

AMERICAN COUSINS

Early American Visitors to London—Augustin Daly and Charles Frohman—The American Chorus Girl—Edna May's Girlhood—Negro Minstrelsy—Mr Gladstone as a Comic Singer

DURING the past twenty years commerce between the English and American stages has grown to vast dimensions. It may be said to have begun in earnest with Augustin Daly's visits, chiefly at first to the Strand Theatre, in the eighties, with farces adapted in a characteristic way from the French and German. Daly's more candid critics declared the literary equipment, before they attacked Shakespeare and Wycherley, of Ada Rehan, John Drew, James Lewis and Mrs Gilbert to be quite unworthy of them. But the Daly farces were innocence by comparison with what was called "Criterion comedy." That, again, was destined to be put in a cool shade by the later method of American adaptation, which dealt with the improprieties of "Hotel Libre-Exchange," for instance, by the simple process of leaving them alone, and so set a new and nasty fashion.

In the course of time Daly overreached himself. No doubt he made exceptions, but his personal attitude was unpleasant toward individuals and aggressive toward the public. To the actors and actresses in his employment he was an autocrat, as no manager nowadays is able to be autocratic.

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His contracts laid down rules for conduct in the street, for attire and hairdressing, as to the manner in which he should be approached—though I do not believe he went so far as one English actor of title, who promulgated a request that members of his company should not recognise him in the street ! Daly forbade, under penalty, any traffic with newspaper representatives in the way of an “interview,” or any *réclame* by the individual. He treated his artists as puppets in his scheme of *mise en scène* ; but he was indubitably a brilliant stage manager, and the English stage owed much to him.

George Edwardes projected the theatre off Leicester Square, which was built according to Daly's ideas, and handed over to him on a long lease. He gave it his name—offence number one to English susceptibilities ; and he ran up the stars and stripes—offence number two. Playgoers who had tendered him profuse hospitality as a visitor resented his assumption, as a resident, of the “boss ” attitude, which Charles Frohman, his successor in the course of time, so sedulously avoided. Daly's company only occupied Daly's Theatre at intervals, and achieved no particular success there. Then, Mr Edwardes was in the curious position of taking a sub-lease of his own house and paying a profit rental to his own tenant. Recently he resumed full possession, the Daly lease having expired. Daly seldom came into personal collision with the public, but freely circulated his portrait, so the chopped moustache, shoe-string tie and seldom removed “billy-cock,” of the type nowadays affected by Mr Winston Churchill, were familiar enough.

In succession to Daly came Charles Frohman, whose career ended so tragically on the *Lusitania*. Frohman first visited

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London filling a modest position on the managerial staff of Haverley's Minstrels. In the course of time he leased half-a-dozen London theatres, he "cornered" all the important dramatists and he shipped half our young actors and actresses across the Atlantic, occasionally restoring them to the Strand. His commitments amounted to millions of money, but he never made a contract; and he always kept his word. He lived in hotels, smoked many cigars, had no interest or amusement outside the theatre, and few could say they knew him. That he was wholly, or mainly, inspired by a love of art, it is impossible to say. Think of *A Night Out*! But undoubtedly he acquired, and exploited, if he did not inspire, some of the best work of the modern stage. And the greater the transaction, the greater the respect of those concerned for the fat, important-seeming, retiring little man. He was generous in his promises, and honest in their fulfilment.

Edwin Forest, to be historic, was the first American visitor to our stage of conspicuous importance. He quarrelled with Macready about fancied wrongs; and the sequel was a tragical riot when Macready visited New York. But what a favourite here was Joseph Jefferson, in the sixties. He stayed three years, and went home with a greatly augmented fortune. Of actresses, Charlotte Cushman made a profound sensation here. But perhaps one had better not dwell on this instance, for London was desperately unkind to Charlotte before it took her to its heart. She nearly starved ere she was able to fulfil her passionate oath that she would conquer in the end. Mary Anderson, the idol of several seasons, thought well enough of England to marry, and to settle here—within a mile or two of Shakespeare's birthplace.

Irving's first manager at the Lyceum was an American,

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Colonel Bateman ; his first leading lady the American, Isabel Bateman, now a nun. And that memory, maybe, gave an extra warmth of cordiality to his welcome when Edwin Booth joined him at the Lyceum for a memorable series of performances of *Othello*. The cordiality was lacking when Henry Dixey, "Adonis" Dixey, arrived. Dixey specialised on a caricature of Irving—always resentful of such exercises in humour, and particularly resentful of this, which was insolent and cruel. It was generally understood that the licensing authorities were moved to restrain Dixey, and there was a good deal of ill feeling between the actors.

Few comedians were more popular here than John Sleeper Clarke, who owned the old Strand theatre. Richard Mansfield was English born, and an old Savoyard. It may be that London did not, when he appeared here, in 1888 and 1889, take him at the valuation he had meanwhile set up in America. From Mansfield, then, came the first outcry of unfair treatment of American artists by European audiences, oft-times repeated, always without foundation. On the other hand, a London success enormously increases the prestige, even of the greatest New York favourite. That is why, when an American artist fails here, he goes home fierce with stories of organised opposition and insular prejudice. So great is the injury to his reputation and monetary status, it must be explained, by any expedient.

But, with what tenderness and affection Rose Stahl always speaks of this country ; and with what good reason ! A fairly successful actress throughout America, it was reserved for the Palace audience to see genius in *The Chorus Lady*, and when she went home again

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America endorsed this opinion in the American way, by making her a millionaire !

Apropos chorus ladies, we began the export to New York of haughty blondes, by the agency of Lydia Thompson, many years ago. When the Gaiety took up the business, marriage depleted the George Edwardes companies to an alarming extent. Suddenly, America invented a new type of chorus girl, and in a charming spirit of reciprocity, sent us specimens. Who can forget the impression made by *The Belle of New York*, when it was produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre in 1898 ?

Mr William Archer denounced it as a "profligate orgy." No matter ! It ran nearly two years. Somewhere or other, it is running still. Much of its success was due to those regal, restless chorus girls, but more to Edna May, who married well, and still adorns London society, now and then singing *Follow On* for a charity with the demureness and simplicity of twenty years ago. Mr C. M. S. M'Clellan, who alternates musical comedy with the soul-searching, or the pseudo-soul-searching, *Leah Kleshna*, told me the story of Edna May's beginning. "When we were casting *The Belle of New York* for production at the New York Casino, we were confronted by a difficulty, for we wanted the Salvation Army to have purity and charm, and to be absolutely free from offence—no 'popular favourite' for us ! We got to the point of rehearsing the piece without having an idea of its leading lady. One day a girl in our chorus who had heard a whisper of our difficulty, asked to see Mr Lederer and myself after a rehearsal, and said she had a cousin, a girl in Hammerstein's chorus, whom she was sure of. We said : 'Bring her along,' and so Edna May (but her name was Pettie then) arrived.

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She was so very demure, so unassuming that we thought we had exceeded the limit. Anyhow, we rehearsed her. After we had run her through, Lederer looked at me, and I looked at him. We did not need to speak."

Mr R. G. Knowles is wont to resent the suggestion that he held no position in America ere he came to London, in 1891, but he will not deny that he owes immense aggrandisement to English approval—which, again, he worked very hard to secure. Seldom has there been such a trial of strength between an audience, which did not quite "get" the "very peculiar American comedian," and an actor, who was determined to win, and did. There is now an intimacy between "Dick" Knowles and his "kind friends in front" without parallel.

Earlier visitors from England to America in the way of music hall performers were not specially happy. Jenny Hill, in spite of a freely circulated glossary of her slang, was a comparative failure. Chevalier did not bring home the pleasantest memory, at any rate, of his first night. Dan Leno was a failure. Chirgwin took the first boat home. The music hall, or "vawderville," as they curiously miscall it there, was in its infancy. But when it did begin to grow, Jack's beanstalk was a fool to it. The immense trusts of to-day think nothing of offering an English artist five times, or even ten times, the salary he commands here, up to a thousand pounds a week. And America is arbitrary in making its own favourites. Twice at any rate during the past few years has it advanced a girl of chorus rank here, from a few pounds a week to hundreds.

We owe, or we owed, to America, negro minstrelsy, which, after a life of little more than half-a-century, is as dead

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as Queen Anne. For the curious it may be recorded that the first English performer to black his face, and to sing a song entitled *The Coal Black Rose*, was the famous comedian of the Haymarket, John Baldwin Buckstone. Rice, one of the fathers of American minstrelsy, visited this country in 1836 to sing the song that made him famous, *Jump, Jim Crow* ! He is said to have developed the song, and dance, from the antics of a deformed negro stable help, whom he watched from the windows of his apartments in Louisville. London caught the madness of New York. The streets rang with the refrain of the song :

“ Wheel about, turn about,
Do jes so ;
An’ ebery time I wheel about
I jump Jim Crow.”

There were Jim Crow hats, Jim Crow pipes—Jim Crow everything.

Soon “Christy Minstrel” troupes crossed the Atlantic, and here, as in America, fought for the right to that description. The entertainment became immensely popular. Sir Robert Peel patronised it gleefully. Thackeray wrote of it tenderly. Gladstone is said to have distinguished himself greatly by his performance, at private parties, of :

“ We’re bound to ride all night,
We’re bound tō ride all day.
And I bet my money on the bob-tailed nag—
And I lost my money on the grey.”

Queen Victoria, who for years averted her face from the regular theatre, but bestowed a curious patronage on wild beast shows, circuses and so forth, often, at the entreaty of her grandchildren, permitted a travelling minstrel troupe to

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visit Balmoral, and professed to be deeply touched by the late Charles Bernard's rendering of—

“ Just before the battle, mother,
I was thinking most of you.”

For years the Moore and Burgess Minstrels thrived so greatly at St James's Hall that they were able to boast that they “never performed out of London.” So strangely assorted a pair as George Washington, familiarly “Pony,” Moore and Frederick Burgess surely never lived together in business amity. Away from St James's Hall they hardly met. Burgess, who was the commercial manager, collected first editions—his library fetched historic prices, after his death—and courted the society of literary men, whom he entertained lavishly.

Moore was the autocrat of the entertainment, for which he contrived to get the reputation of innocuousness to schools and families. His personal predilection was the prize ring. He loved to be surrounded by pugilists, and betted largely on their encounters. His origin was lowly—he got his nickname as a boy in an American circus—and his personal habits curious. But he had a gift of melody, and put his name to hundreds of songs, if he were not able to prove their actual composition ; for instance :

“ Don't you hear dem bells ?
Don't you hear dem bells ?
Yes, I hear dem bells,”

which was sung at his graveside by a minstrel choir.

Here is a sample of his method. He gave an experimental engagement to an American ballad vocalist and humorist, whose singing at rehearsal he casually approved, but added

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impressively : “ What you’ve got to do, is to make ’em laf ; and if you don’t make ’em laf, there’s a boat sails for home on Wednesday.” The confident comedian prepared a joke which had shaken New York to its foundations : “ Why is an old maid like a tomayto ? ” the answer being : “ Bekase there’s no male to mate her.” Pray observe the American accent. He sang his song with fine effect. Full of courage, he attacked the interlocutor with his conundrum. “ Well, sir,” repeated that important person in the approved style ; “ And why *is* an old maid like a tomahto ? ” Faintly came the response : “ Bekase—bekase the boat sails on Wednesday.”

Once a year Moore took a benefit, and gave a ball, which some of the greatest in stageland delighted to honour. It was the most important function in old Bohemia. Morning broke on a wild orgy ; and Moore’s speech of acknowledgment was wont to be unprintable—at any rate, his supplementary speeches were. But whatever his strange characteristics, negro minstrelsy died with him. The St James’s Hall entertainment, with the author of the ineffable *Passing of the Third Floor Back* added to its staff, was formed into a limited liability company. A vast hotel has swallowed up even its site !

CHAPTER XVII

NIGHT CLUBS

The Receptions of Madam Cornelys—Early Victorian Night Houses
—The Corinthian Club—*Two Lovely Black Eyes*—Sergeant
Ballantyne behind the Scenes

WHEN St Patrick's Day comes round, Irishmen in London prefer to do reverence to their patron saint at the church in Soho Square, which has a deeply interesting history of its own—but it does not come within the scope of these records. Still, I wonder how many of the pious pilgrims know that they are making their way to the scene of the first night club? For St Patrick's, Soho, occupies in part the site of the mansion where Madam Cornelys conducted her famous Receptions. Teresa, we know, had been an opera singer on the Continent—you will find much scandalous detail of her earlier in the memoirs of the veracious Casanova. She acquired Carlisle House; and for several seasons smart society danced the nights through under her direction. She must have had much skill in organisation. Her advertisements were dignified and plausible; her charges of admission were high. The diarists of that time describe glowing scenes in the great ballroom which enclosed the garden of Carlisle House. But Madame did not manage to make a fortune. She had rivals, and powerful enemies; and, after strange vicissitudes, including the sale of asses' milk in the parks, died in the Fleet Prison.



MABEL GRAY

NIGHT CLUBS

At any rate there was not to be seen at her Receptions the unveiled vice of the Kate Hamiltons and the Motts of Early Victorian days; or at the more public Piccadilly Saloon, near the Criterion, the Holborn Casino (where the notorious Mabel Gray led the dances) on the site of which the Holborn Restaurant now stands, and the Argyll Rooms, engulfed in another restaurant, the Trocadero. Mabel Gray was an assistant at Shoolbred's in her girlhood. Tradition said she married a Russian prince, and died in childbirth.

Colonel Greville, a buck of the Regency, founded the Argyll Rooms, which at first maintained a good style, in competition with the Pantheon. The first building, known as Laurent's Casino, of considerable beauty, was destroyed by fire. There is extant a picture of the later rooms by George Cruikshank's brother Robert—*The Cyprian's Ball*.

When the Argyll Rooms lost their licence for dancing their last manager, Robert Bignell, who had made a vast fortune, turned the building, with very little alteration, into a music hall. The bar, or "lounge," was as large as the auditorium, which it commanded through arches; and Bignell's successor, Sam Adams, cultivated this side of the house as carefully as he did the stage performances. Adams was a pleasant, gentlemanly man, who claimed, I believe, a county family, much liked by men who gathered round him, and bought seas of champagne, the only drink he personally encouraged. But the place never prospered. Adams would passionately indicate a tablet let into the wall, in memoriam of the Argyll Rooms, which he declared to be a curse on his enterprise. During its career as a music hall, the Trocadero enjoyed a spell of popularity, when Charles Coborn sang *Two Lovely Black Eyes*, a parody on a sentimental song of

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American origin, *Sweet Nelly's Blue Eyes*. It drew the town as nothing had done, probably, since Ross sang *Sam Hall* at the Cider Cellars. But Coborn was unfortunate in having a stale contract, and his salary at the time was no more than ten pounds a week. He was allowed to duplicate at the London Pavilion, but even then did not get his deserts, or, at any rate, what would now be his market price. It was at the Trocadero, too, that R. G. Knowles made his first hit in town.

For a time after the suppression of the Argyll Rooms London languished, no doubt, for the opportunity of late dancing and drinking. An attempt to supply the deficiency was made with the Lotos Club in Regent Street, founded by one Russell, whose success in organising such institutions had earned him the name of King of Clubs Russell. To do him justice, he maintained a level of respectability which has never been salubrious to "mixed" clubs, as his last venture, the Prince of Wales's, ensuing to the Lyric Club, in Coventry Street, proved once more. The Lyric Club was maintained at the outset by that lifelong and lavish patron of the stage, Lord Londesborough. An immediate follower of the Lotos Club was the New Club, ensuing to the Falstaff Club, on the premises of Evans's song-and-supper rooms, Covent Garden. Its secretary was Colonel Fred Wellesley, who married Kate Vaughan, and the Gaiety was well represented in the membership. But the New Club was dull, and died. Its room is filled by the National Sporting Club.

No charge of dullness could be brought against the Corinthian Club, off St James's Square, inspired by John Hollingshead. It endured for years, and succumbed, I believe, long after Hollingshead's departure, to trouble in respect of card-



EVANS'S MUSIC HALL

NIGHT CLUBS

playing. A certain pretence of daytime club life was maintained—lunches and dinners. But supper and dancing were the mainstay of the club, which for a long time was a popular resort of the smarter set in Bohemia. The famous *chef*, “featured,” as the Americans say, in the prospectus of the original Corinthian Club, guaranteed a choice of twenty-five cocktails, seventeen soups and thirty-three entrees. The moral code of the club was, let us say, a limited polyandry. In this respect it ranked higher than its hundred imitators, which sprang up in all directions in the nineties.

Sam Lewis the money-lender, who began life as a traveller in jewellery, chiefly working military depots, and died a multi-millionaire, was fond of the Corinthian. A young barrister, now of importance, who had halted on the threshold of his career to dissipate a small fortune on the Stock Exchange, said to him one night: “I wonder if you would like to lend me a hundred pounds, Mr Lewis.” “I should, my lad,” said Sam, “but it ’ud be no kindness to you. I suppose your frills will go up if I was to offer you a tenner for luck?”

One of the keenest rivals of the Corinthian Club was the Gardenia, on the east side of Leicester Square. This was directed at one time by the Brothers Bohee, two coloured singers and dancers who had great charm. They mostly dressed in smart white linen suits, played the banjo to admiration and effectively sang such songs as *A Boy’s Best Friend is his Mother*. London, following the lead of the Prince of Wales, developed for the Bohees that infatuation which is the perplexity, extending to disgust, of Americans; and the black fellows were ruined.

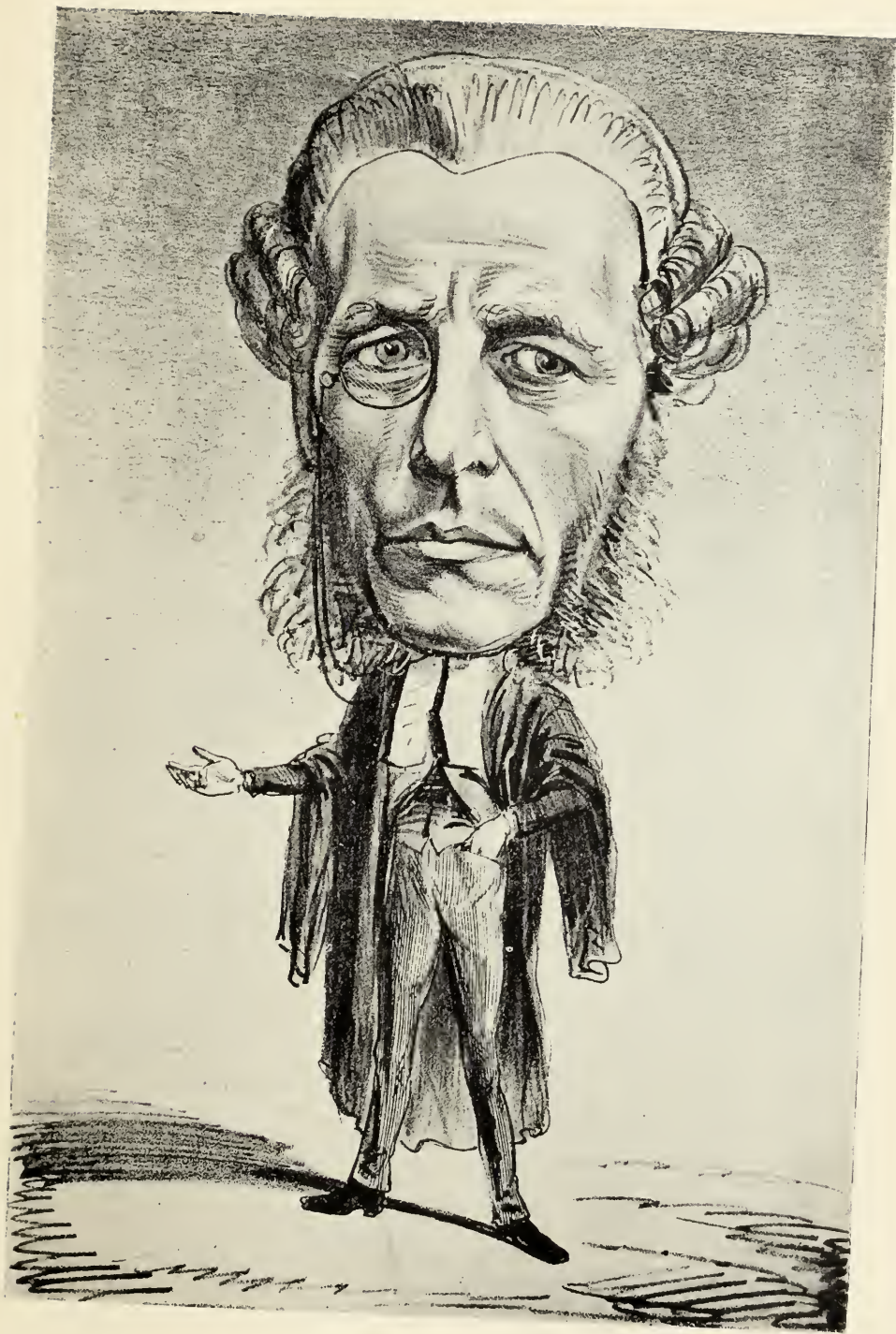
During its career the Gardenia Club was the scene of a performance deemed deliciously improper in those days—ere

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“classical” dancing had arrived. La Goulue was at that time one of many dancers whom Paris was supposed to admire—though the admiration was chiefly supplied by vulgar excursionists. Anyway, La Goulue and three high-kicking damsels were imported to Leicester Square, and the members of the Gardenia Club were accorded the opportunity of witnessing their disgusting and wholly indescribable antics.

Elsewhere in London were innumerable night clubs—the Waterloo, the Palm, the Alsatian, the Thalia, the Nell Gwynne, the Supper Club (longest lived of all). In one case the proprietor was the widower of one of the greatest stars that ever shone in the comic opera firmament. Another was run by the brother of a distinguished actor-manager. There would be a farcical form of election to membership, a “committee” and a subscription. But mostly all rules were disregarded. Any patron of apparent promise was elected on the doormat, and so the clubs fell an easy prey to the police. They would be raided as gambling hells or as the resort of loose women, and proof of all their iniquities was easy.

During the daytime these clubs were the abomination of desolation. Indeed they continued in this mood till midnight. Then the visitor must present himself at a heavy door in an ill-lighted street. He would be furtively eyed through a wicket, perhaps admitted cautiously by a liveried porter, who was usually a retired prize-fighter. An ante-room had to be crossed, and a second door negotiated. Then the intruder reached a hall of dazzling light, a large room where dancing was “indulged in,” as the reporters say, to the strains of a string band eked out by a piano. A supper-room never acquired much importance, but at several bars vile drink would be dispensed at a many-per-cent. profit.



SERJEANT BALLANTINE

NIGHT CLUBS

A vast number of well-known people used to affect the night clubs—theatrical folk, literary folk, legal luminaries, of course with the object of studying human nature. An eminent K.C. of to-day was seldom missing from the old Corinthian Club—and the memory certainly made him a little tender in his cross-examination, in a recent case, of a fellow *viveur* with whom fortune had not dealt so gently. It would never have done for him to risk such a retort as Sergeant Ballantyne got. “And pray, sir” (said the famous bully), “may I ask what you, an English public man, were doing at the Moulin Rouge on a Sunday night.” “Well, Sergeant, pretty much the same thing as you were doing behind the scenes at the Alhambra on Saturday night.” Ballantyne was, of course, one of the mainstays of the Alhambra in his day.

Some years ago the police swept away the night clubs with a ruthless hand. It may be their scandal reached a limit when a well-known actress was knocked down, in the Nell Gwynne Club, Long Acre, by a race-horse owner of eccentric habits, and kicked, as it might be in Billingsgate. Bow Street was invoked, but a now well-known actor-manager intervened, the summons was withdrawn, the world at large disappointed of a huge sensation, and a matter of ten thousand pounds changed hands.

There has lately been a flourishing recrudescence of night clubs, though the war checked their growth. What their potentialities are may be gathered from the fact that the proprietor of one, who was not notorious for his wealth, made nearly fifty thousand pounds in a twelvemonth.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEAD-HEADS AND CLAQUERS

How Theatres are packed—Some Subterfuges of Seat-beggars—
Henry Irving and the Bailiff—The Chorus that sang too soon
—M. Quelquechose, Organiser of Success

ONE of our most experienced managers assured me that if it were possible to establish a kind of clearing-house for seat-beggars—that is, to give all applicants with some sort of a credential, real or imagined, an “order” for a particular house periodically reserved for their delectation—it would be possible to pack a good-sized theatre nightly with these play-loving paupers—from fifteen hundred to two thousand. This plan might relieve prosperous theatres, but it certainly would not satisfy the “dead-head,” nor would it suppress him. Nothing will do that. He is the most fastidious in selection, the most critical, the least satisfied of playgoers. For him, the best is seldom good enough, and to offer him other than he particularly demands is to court reproach. Moreover, it would not suit the theatres, on all occasions, to avail themselves of such a clearing-house. The dead-head has his uses, and there is no manager, say what he will, who is wholly independent of him.

Was it Buckstone, or was it Ben Webster, to whom a brother manager complained that he could not lure the public to his theatre, even with free seats? Said Webster, or it

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may have been Buckstone, "Have you tried 'em with a drink?" The truth is, every empty seat is injurious to the *morale* of a theatre. A crowded house is an incomparably effective advertisement, and heartens the performers. Now, every theatrical manager will tell you that the play which appeals to every class of the community has yet to be written. The stalls are often packed while the less expensive seats drag ; or pit, circles and gallery will, in their thousands, gaze across an empty stretch of stalls. So every theatrical manager has at one time or another seats for distribution at no loss to himself, and, whatever his pretence, assuredly does distribute them according to his discretion, or to such discretion as he thinks he has. And a wisely bestowed seat blesses him who gives just as much as it blesses him who takes.

As to whom a manager might, or does, or should present seats—that is his affair entirely. To say that a journalist, or any other, has a "right" of admission to a theatre is preposterous nonsense. No right exists. A theatre is a place of business ; it is for its manager to decide how he will conduct it. It has been found mutually convenient for the theatres to issue free seats, or "invitations" for first performances to the representatives of newspapers, who are sometimes twitted with getting their amusement for nothing. That assumes, of course, amusement ! I venture to assert that any space, in any newspaper, filled with any-tempered remark about a theatre, is of a value as mere "publicity" at least equal to the price of the seat.

It is the custom of the West End theatres to issue from seventy to a hundred seats to the newspapers for a first night. To an expert the "second seat" affords interesting study. Most of the regular writers about the stage have a subsidiary

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job—a daily and perhaps also a weekly paper, an evening paper and perhaps also a provincial paper. This second seat is filled by the critic's wife, or his cousin, or his confidential secretary, or even an obliging tradesman. To the theatre manager, who feels that he is entertaining a guest whom he did not select, the "second seat" is a source of rage and irritation—to the disinterested, of infinitely amusing surmise.

It is a popular error to suppose that the familiar celebrities making up a London first night are all dead-heads. There are quite a number of important persons well known to be so deeply interested in the theatre as to wish to attend most first performances and to pay for their seats. For them at the leading theatres seats are wont to be reserved till the option is taken up or declined. Of course every manager reserves a right of hospitality to his intimate friends. And the old hand could mostly identify the house if he glanced at the stalls through a hole in an unknown curtain. Tree's first nights differ from Irving's of old ; the Haymarket differs from the St James's. One manager has a kindly, characteristic habit of making his second row of stalls a pageant of superannuated sweethearts. Another flaunts his dubious city friendships. Elsewhere one sees Freemasonry predominant, or sport, or the vestry.

But there is still the eternal mendicant. He is often an actor—and some managers most especially resent his importunities, while others find a particular pleasure in giving to a "worn and weary brother." Sad to relate, he is mostly ungrateful and hypercritical. Once, with a friend I had adjourned to the buffet. "Well?" I said interrogatively. "I think," was the response, "he is the worst Hamlet I ever saw." The dismal face, unmistakably of an old actor,

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was thrust between us. "Young gentlemen," said he, "forgive the intrusion, *but may I pay for your drinks?*"

When the brothers Kiralfy worked in amity, a seat-seeker was referred to Bolossy, who inspected his card, and said: "Yes! yes! You got to see my brother!" walking onward to other business. Three times within two hours the patient dead-head repeated the process, venturing at last to say: "Will your brother be long, sir?" "My brother is in New York," said the imperturbable Bolossy.

An old actor accosted Augustus Harris in the vestibule of Drury Lane. "And what can I do for you?" said the great man.

"I thought you might find me two stalls," the visitor proceeded. The showman instinct rose in Harris.

"Two stalls! You might just as well ask me for a guinea to-night."

"And I know the time when that would have given you a bit of trouble, Gus," was the irrepressible retort of old friendship. Harris capitulated, like the good fellow he was.

During the long run of *Charley's Aunt* at the Globe, a member of the company received a letter begging his kindly offices for two seats. "My name may not be familiar to you" (said the applicant), "but I venture to remind you that during a long residence in Birmingham I had the distinguished honour of cutting your late revered father's corns."

Once a play was in progress at the Vaudeville, which had not appealed greatly to the public. There walked into the vestibule, somewhat unsteadily, a smartly dressed man, who preferred to the acting manager a request for a seat. Eager for any excuse to fill a stall with so presentable a person, the official began to interrogate his visitor. Was he a journalist? Had he a friend in the company? Was he directly or

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indirectly concerned with the stage—in short, could he give any reason whatsoever why he should be accorded a free seat?

“Dear old chap,” came the unsteady reply, “look at the rain.”

Hardly less impudent was the gentleman in evening dress, accompanied by a lady, who handed a card to a West End acting manager with the remark that he had been given to understand that it would procure him two seats.

“I’m afraid you’ve been fooled,” was the reply. “I don’t know the gentleman.”

“But I’ve brought this lady out. I—I—well, it isn’t convenient for me to pay.”

“Sorry I can’t help you,” said the manager.

“Well—you look a sportsman, w-wont you give me *your* card to some other Johnny?” said the unabashed rounder.

Sir Henry Irving laughed at this story more heartily than most folk to whom I have told it: a well-known literary man received an acutely professional visit from two bailiffs of the Clerkenwell County Court, with the elder of whom he had to return to Duncan Terrace, while the younger remained in possession. The business proved capable of speedy arrangement. The bailiff, striking a note of sympathy with his charge, spent three hours in the capacity of a gossiping guide to theatrical Islington. He remembered Grimaldi, and still wept for Phelps. When the parting came the man of letters tried to slip half-a-sovereign into the hand of his quaint friend. It was sternly refused. Would he accept no memorial of that morning? Yes—he would like two seats for the theatre. “For anywheres, guv’nor—always exceptin’ the Lyceum. I could never stomach ‘im.”

At the Savage Club one night Henry Pettitt suggested an

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expedition to the old Olympic, where, he had heard, an unauthorised performance of one of his plays was in progress. As we approached the theatre a friendly person on the pavement slipped two orders for the pit into our hands. Alas ! the pit was declared to be full. But we could get "transfers" to the upper circle for eighteenpence each. Pettitt did not think he cared for the upper circle. He mischievously inspected, and declined, seats at various rates of "transfer," and finally asked for a rebate, in respect of his pit orders, of two shillings on a two-guinea box. The box-office keeper saw the transaction acquiring a magnitude beyond his powers, and sent for the manager.

"Why, Mr Pettitt," said that functionary, recognising his visitor with some distress, "what can I do for you, sir ?"

"Take my piece off, and be damned to you for a rogue," said the angry dramatist.

Some orders have a definite cash value. There used to be, and still may be, a barber's shop in Drury Lane where "orders" purchased from their original recipients were regularly on sale—the prices current, of half-guinea stalls, ranging from eighteenpence to five shillings, was an interesting appraisalment of the popularity of a "popular success."

Organised opposition is a phrase often in the mouth of the disappointed impresario. But what about organised applause ? On a greater or a lesser scale, it is not uncommon. An audience is easily led, and a single cheer will often swell to a chorus. The temptation to ensure that single cheer is great, and I do not know that one can be too hard on the friend of the debutant who succumbs.

I well recall a Gaiety first night, when a charming girl had to sing a seductive song with a swinging chorus. Twenty

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gallery boys had been trained to pick it up. Alas! they did not wait to hear the singer, but roared their verse lustily the moment the orchestra gave the note. The audience, at first bewildered, quickly appreciated the situation and shouted with laughter.

All this is innocent enough; but for many years there flourished around Leicester Square a gang of claquers capable of infamous excesses. Their leader was well known—I have often sat near him in the cafés in the neighbourhood. He made no secret of his trade, had printed cards, “M. Quelquechose : organisier of success,” and he was even recognised by some managements. Foreign artists familiar with the institution at home frankly accepted it here. I don't know that much harm was done by the procuration of a little applause. But one step farther led the jealous performer to procure the reverse of applause for a rival—and so we once had rioting long continued at the Alhambra, which the police could not quell, but which the humour of a comedian did. One night when the accustomed demonstration began he wearily composed himself for sleep at the foot of a proscenium pillar till the noise should cease. There was a shout of laughter, and no more demonstration. Meanwhile, in abortive proceedings at Marlborough Street, both the distinguished artists involved admitted the employment of the claquers.

Worst feature of the claque system : when the ruffians who battered on it were refused employment they grew insolent and backed their blackmailing demands with threats and even with assault. It is not so long since the directorate of one of the great variety houses adjacent to Leicester Square circulated, officially, the confident statement that it had at length completely eradicated the scandal of the claque ! I wonder !

CHAPTER XIX

PRINCES AND PALACES

The "Royal Command" to the Music Hall—A Noble "Chairman"
—King Edward a Prisoner—Dan Leno at Court—A Terrible
Tragedy

WHEN, in 1912, the King and Queen paid a formal visit to the Palace Theatre, and thrilled the music hall profession with tardy "recognition," the precedent of Mr Justice Coleridge, in demanding an official description of Connie Gilchrist, was carefully followed. It was assumed that their Majesties would arrive at the Palace Theatre with a childlike ignorance of the music hall and its professors, and decided that no song or smirk must run the risk of offence. This sedulous process of sterilisation had a curious sequel. George Robey was the outstanding success of the show.

But King George, like his father and his uncles, had a pretty fair knowledge of the West End music halls, notably of the Alhambra, the Empire and the London Pavilion—acquired, of course, unofficially. Queen Alexandra had visited the Empire and the Alhambra—there were no fewer than nineteen royal visits to the last-named house during the run of Sir Arthur Sullivan's ballet. In the old days of the Aquarium, Queen Alexandra "running in," as she often did, with her children, must have acquired a certain intimacy with the characteristics of the modern

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music hall. Genée, she made several opportunities of seeing; and now that the ice is broken, often visits the London Coliseum, especially when there is a ballet dancer of distinction there.

Queen Victoria's patronage was once curiously obtained for a music hall performance. Even while, in the long days of her mourning, she averted her face from the theatre, less distinguished entertainments often found their way to her presence on the intercession of her grandchildren—Bernard and Vestris's Minstrels, Wombwell's Wild Beast Show, Hengler's and Sanger's circuses and Buffalo Bill were well-accustomed visitors at Court before the theatre and the opera came into their own again. But most productive was her Majesty's casual patronage of a troupe of bears, wandering the country-side in a humble way. They were quickly noted by an astute agent, brought to the Oxford Music Hall, and, as the "Royal Bears," were the great attraction of the moment. Incidentally, they ousted Clarence Holt from his dressing-room, an outrage which "the favourite Hamlet of the Crowned Heads of Europe" resented in torrents of blasphemy and coarsely humorous contrast.

Some thirty years ago the Prince of Wales created a mild sensation by entertaining at dinner, on a Sunday evening, half-a-dozen actors, none of whom were, in fact, strangers to him. And shortly there was more trouble, when it became known that "Jolly John" Nash and Arthur Lloyd had been summoned to the house of the Earl of Carrington, there, under the guidance of William Holland, at the time managing the Alhambra, to entertain a party including the heir apparent. Nash boldly accosted his host as "Mr Chairman," and demanded a "chorus all together" for

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the song in which at the time he was particularly popular ;

“ Hey ! hi ! here, stop ! Waiter, waiter ! Fizz ! Pop !
I’m Racketty Jack, no money I lack
And I’m the boy for a spree.”

“ We continued,” wrote Mr Nash, in an account of his experience, “ to sing alternately, Arthur Lloyd and myself, until about four in the morning, and left with an assurance that we had much pleased his lordship and his princely guest.” Lloyd was summoned to a second party ; and this time asked to bring Alfred Vance.

King Edward’s first official visit to a music hall was probably to the London Coliseum, not then, indeed, a music hall, at the outset of its vicissitudinous career, now set in a groove of prosperity. A wonderful box had been contrived—the proudest detail of Mr Oswald Stoll’s tremendous structure. The illustrious guest was to step from his carriage into a waiting apartment, to touch a button, and to travel quickly, almost imperceptibly, to his appointed seat. The box worked *à velours*, till the King entered it. Then it stuck obstinately. His Majesty was not wont to experience such accidents patiently, but for once was in a fine humour when he was released from his prison. “ Donald, Donald—‘ Eh ! What, what, what ? ’ ” he said to the unhappy acting manager, quoting a song which Marie Lloyd was singing at the time. And he proceeded to hope that the stage machinery, of which he had heard so much, would not play similar tricks with the anxious impresario.

Toward Christmas, 1901, the variety stage got its first important recognition — Dan Leno was summoned to

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Sandringham, where he gave a liberal selection from his repertoire before a family party.

The suggestion came from George Ashton, who for many years personally managed King Edward's playgoing, and whose deepest impression is one of his Majesty's anxiety to let his entertainers know that their efforts had been appreciated. "I remember," Mr Ashton recalled the other day, "an occasion on which the King proposed a visit to the Haymarket, where Arthur Cecil was playing different parts in some play, on alternate evenings. The King had informed himself of the fact that Cecil preferred himself greatly in one part, and asked that care be taken that a night on which Mr Cecil could feel at his best should be selected." The Sandringham entertainment to which reference is made was the first sanctioned by the King after his accession to the throne; and it was Mr Ashton who suggested that the occasion might fitly be chosen for a specific recognition of the variety stage, toward which King Edward had always had a kindly disposition; and in that spirit Leno was included. The little man was possessed by nervousness, but acquitted himself bravely, and was quite himself when he reached London again.

He completely disregarded the rule of reticence hitherto sternly imposed on the entertainers of royalty! The newspapers were filled with serio-comic stories of Dan's adventures—how he joked the footman, how he forgot the important half of his dress suit, and had to improvise, how he wandered into the shrubbery to cool down before supper, and was arrested by a detective, and how much he owed, in his nervous elation, to "King Edward's usual kindness and tact."

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A siege of the London Pavilion was the immediate result. For days there was a queue at the box-office, made up for the most part of people who had never before visited a music hall. But what was good enough for the King was good enough for them. And the coffers of the Pavilion overflowed.

This was but three years before Leno's death ; and there is no doubt the poor little man was already suffering from the malady which killed him. He became terribly excited ; and indulged in the wildest dreams of honours that might be conferred. But saner folk in music hall land have suffered from that malady !

He thought that at least the office of the King's Jester should be revived. Apropos, it has been in abeyance since Stuart times, though W. F. Wallet, a circus clown, habitually used it. A discreet official to whom Leno personally mooted the question suggested that he should set out his views in writing ; but he never did so. As the clouds settled over his intellect, he would confer knighthood on all and sundry. Later, the opportunity of entertaining the Court was accorded to Mr Harry Lauder and Mr Bransby Williams.

In the spring of 1911 it was made known that King George and his Queen proposed to honour a performance by selected music hall artists. The late Sir Edward Moss was mainly responsible, and the intention was that the Empire, Edinburgh, should be the scene of the function, the Court being in that neighbourhood. This apparent agreement with the King's convenience had the further effect of preventing any jealous competition of London halls. The arrangements for the command performance were well on their way when one

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of the most terrible tragedies in the history of popular entertainment occurred. The apparatus for illuminating the performance of an American conjurer named Lafayette miscarried. The theatre was burned to the ground. There was a terrible loss of life, Lafayette himself perishing. And in sight of this holocaust all thought of the Command Performance was abandoned.

We shall never get the inner history of the Command Performance of 1912—a fierce contortion of personal ambition, a bitter antagonism of jealousies, a triumph for nobody in particular. Moss was on his deathbed when it was announced that the question of a Command Performance had been revived ; that it would take place in London, and at the Palace Theatre. With the choice of the Palace there was no great quarrel—none, on the part of the public. It proved that the turn of the only other house seriously concerned in a competition was to come. But the programme—who was to be included ? and by whom ? The difficulties of the committee were greater than the layman can imagine. It was not a question, merely, of scheduling the fifteen or twenty most distinguished artists. A programme must “ balance.” A procession of singers would have been stupid. The risk of monotony, of stage weights—all these technical matters had to be considered.

Soon it was whispered about that the artist most characteristic of the modern variety stage was to be excluded from the chosen company ; and in some quarters there was expectation of a poignant counterblast. But it never came. When at last the list was made public, its dominant spirit was at once apparent. In the event, there was a picturesque crowd, a rather dull performance which could not, by the

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wildest stretch of imagination, be called typical of the English music hall, but, above all, there was another brilliantly contrived world-wide and sensational advertisement for the Palace Theatre.

Not a "Command" performance, but one of rare interest and distinction, was given at the London Coliseum in the autumn of 1913. It was nominally on the incentive of Sarah Bernhardt, in aid of the Charing Cross Hospital and the French hospital; and, in its association of great dramatic artists as Ellen Terry, great lyric artists as Madame Kirkby Lunn, three musical knights, and Yvette Guilbert, recorded the last phase of the music hall. But it contrived to assemble not less than a dozen typical low comedians, some of them with tinted noses. They should have chanted *The Brook*.

CHAPTER XX

MUSIC HALL AGENCY

Hugh Jay Didcott—His Extravagance—Where Celebrities were discovered—Many Marriages—The Quarrels of Artists and Managers

I HAVE never chosen my friends for their virtues ; and so I still preserve of Hugh Jay Didcott a memory more tender than of many who have left these latitudes. “ You know the best of me, and the worst of me,” he once said. The retort was not to be repressed ; nor was it resented : “ And they’re both all right, Diddy ! ”

Let the worst rest, now ! It has been volubly recorded. The secret of Didcott’s life was a passion for spending money. He described it as an incurable disease. I have never encountered such reckless extravagance—to the most trivial detail of personal expenditure. I have known him, penniless, borrow a five-pound note, and spend four pounds ten shillings on the immediate entertainment of the person who had lent it. The only prevision he ever practised was to retain a cab fare—homeward at night, and inward on the morrow. To gratify his mania for squandering money, he would procure it by any means ; but, to my observation, the most severe critics of his life and character were those most deeply indebted to his genius and to his prodigality.

It would be hard to estimate the direct and indirect obligation of the modern music hall, and of individual

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professors thereof, to his prescience and skill. He was an incomparably fine judge of every kind of public performance, from Fechter's Hamlet to "Mr Mounsey," which was his favourite style for incompetence; a coarse and scathing critic—especially of the capacity, and cupidity, of other agents. They are, indeed, a strange lot, in their range from vulgar probity to prosperous parasitism. In the neighbourhood of 1890 Didcott's business was worth not less than ten thousand a year. He died insolvent, though the kindly ministration of relatives kept him in luxury, through the agonies of cancer, to the last hour of his life.

He was not the first agent—that distinction belongs to Ambrose Maynard, whose successor was Didcott's immediate predecessor, Charles Roberts. This information is not particularly important, but may guarantee one's good faith. Didcott certainly endowed music hall agency with style and commercial system, and remained throughout his life its most picturesque figure. He has taken performers from soldiers' sing-songs, from Margate sands, from East End music halls, from penny gaffs—I could append great names to all these instances, but naturally I refrain. He has bestowed upon these "discoveries" attractive descriptions, dressed them presentably, provided them with pocket money, selected songs for them and strenuously rehearsed them. Of a world-famous serio-comic singer, whom he admired prodigiously, his despair was that "one might spend a hundred guineas on a gown for the —— and still she wouldn't clean her nails."

Didcott's training for his career was that he was an inveterate man about town ere he was out of his teens. I have heard much nonsense talked about his humble origin.

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He was, in fact, the son of a prosperous furrier, from whom he inherited money, soon squandered. His elder brother was a wealthy stockbroker. His two nephews were men of importance on the Stock Exchange too. A third is an able barrister. "Didcott" was impulsively annexed from the sign of the railway station, by a passing traveller whose affairs had induced perplexity, and who, turning over a new leaf, thought well to indite a new name at the top of the page. The earlier "Maurice" was also assumed. Never mind the original.

One never appealed in vain to Didcott for information as to the Bohemian life of the sixties, or as to theatrical event. He was a glib Shakespearean scholar, well versed in Hebrew text and ritual, fluent in French and German, and a smart lawyer, especially in respect of the conflicts of debtor and creditor. In early days of need he tried several trades. The first which concerns us is that of the actor. He played Macbeth at Drury Lane, and, I have heard, pretty well. Then he became a comic singer. Florence St John was a music hall vocalist at that time, and the two, in camaraderie, would make one pair of white kid gloves serve them ! Didcott had a song with a refrain which an unkind manager whistled significantly as he counted four sovereigns into the artist's expectant palm at "treasury." It was "Never again ; never again !" This may have ended the career of a comic singer ; and so, meant much for agency.

For twenty years artists begged and intrigued for the privilege of describing Didcott as their agent. He paid himself generously for his work, but then, it was payment largely by results. The performer whose weekly wage had been run up from five pounds to fifty could hardly resist a liberal percentage of the large, unhopd-for balance. The

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expenses of such a business, even its legitimate expenses, are enormous. The weekly outgoings from the agent's York Road office were swollen by a hundred pensions—to serious dependents, to casual domesticities, to pensioners listed in a spirit of pure benevolence, to barefaced black-mailers.

Some of Didcott's early matrimonial adventures became public property. With his right hand he gave to the stage a charming actress, who married well, and retired; with his left, the amazing Maud Darrell, who died within a few weeks of her father. But few, even of his most intimate associates, knew that in 1890 he secretly married a charming lady, an accomplished artist, with whom, in spite of divagations, he lived in affectionate communion, maintaining a home, which changed twenty-one times in twenty-two years (that was one of his cherished customs) from one London suburb to another, and visiting it pretty regularly for a Sunday dinner which had scrupulously preceded him.

Princely entertaining was a part of his business system. Two items, only, of this outlay were a luncheon-table at Simpson's, and a dinner-table at Romano's, habitually reserved, always filled to their capacity, and entered to the large account of the enterprising impresario, whose taste in cigars was, incidentally, that of a super-connoisseur, but who never drank, save in extreme moderation.

When the linking up of music halls and the "cornering" of artists first began to commend themselves to managers—to Newson Smith, Sutton, Payne and the really considerable men of that day—Didcott's voice was influential at the board, wise, and certain. When the first whispers of dispute between the music hall artists as a body and the music hall managers

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as a body were heard it was open to the agent to go over to the managers, who would have eagerly associated him, and his course might have proved to be that of the diplomatist. The ideal of agency is to play the part of an honest broker between manager and performer. But music hall agents have never dealt in the ideal. Some cannot spell the word, more cannot understand it, and most cultivate a Teutonic materialism.

At any rate, Didcott discarded the managers, and called a meeting of the performers. A policy of cohesion was agreed upon. It was the cohesion of a fine, dry, silver sand. The unhappy agent, who may have been sincere in his adherence to the then weaker side, or who may have desired to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, was left friendless, on either side, and led a troubled, unprofitable life to its end. But he stood erect, invincibly resourceful, gay, sarcastic, a careful and well-restrained *viveur*—the most exigent customer at Shipwright's, an indifferent player at billiards, more efficient at poker, a lively, instructive companion—a man the mention of whose name still always sounds the summons of apologetic loyalty; but whose memory can always command the tears of one friend, unforgetting.

CHAPTER XXI

COUNTERFEIT PRESENTMENTS

Stories of Stage Caricature—Oscar Wilde in Comedy and Opera—The “darned mounseer”—Irving and his Imitators—The Sensitive Sultan

WHEN Dr Johnson heard that Foote proposed to caricature him he gripped his cane and briefly stated the course he would take in such an event. He is understood to have had no further provocation. The cane should properly take the form of the Lord Chamberlain, who has been brought into use on many occasions by persons of importance, aggrieved by counterfeit presentments.

It is probable that the name of Mr Ayrton would long ago have been forgotten did it not survive in connection with an historic instance of stage caricature. In *Happy Land*—of which, it being a burlesque of his own *Wicked World*, W. S. Gilbert was part author—produced at the Court Theatre in 1873, there was a wild dance by three members of the Government, Mr Gladstone, Mr Robert Lane and Mr Ayrton, the forgotten Commissioner of Works, which caused a terrible to-do.

Having begun thus early, Gilbert may be said to have become an habitual offender. One of his biographers speaks of the “æsthetic craze” as having been “killed” by *Patience*. Bunthorne was at any rate clearly meant for Oscar Wilde, who was always a convenient mark for the satirist. He made his theatrical debut in *Where’s the Cat*, at the

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Criterion. His representative, as Scott Ramsey, was then Sir Herbert Tree, destined to be caricatured himself *ad nauseam*. Wilde appeared again as Lambert Streynke in *The Colonel*, and again in *The Charlatan* at the Haymarket—written, by the way, around Home, the spiritualist.

Gilbert's very obvious attack on the Kaiser in the dancing hussar episode introduced to *The Grand Duke* passed without remark. But his *Mikado* caused diplomatic exchanges—after a respectable career of thirty years on the stage! Mrs D'Oyly Carte contemplated a revival of the opera about the time of Prince Fushima's visit to this country, but she received an imperative hint to abandon the revival, and shortly an official order was promulgated that during the visit of his Japanese Highness not a note of the music of *The Mikado* should offend his ear.

In an earlier instance, France was called to arms in respect of Gilbert's ribaldry; and it is said that twenty brave officers offered to "meet" him. This was apropos to a phrase, "the darned mounseer," in *Ruddigore*. Really, Gilbert meant to satirise our insular contempt for foreigners, but the London correspondent of *The Figaro* construed the verses otherwise, and telegraphed them to his paper with angry comment. Poor M. Johnson! In spite of his name he was exceedingly French. He lived here forty years, but never understood us, or our language, though he made many friends, being an amiable old creature. To "see ourselves as others see us" one had but to read the contributions of M. Johnson to *The Figaro*. He took the deepest interest in Guilbert's first visit to London, and it may be his exertions hastened his death, which took place during the course of her engagement at the Empire.

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Eastern potentates have always been super-sensitive. In an old-time Strand burlesque, by Sir Frank Burnand, called *Kissi-Kissi*, Henry Corri, one of a large, musical family, now represented by the redoubtable referee of the National Sporting Club fights, presented a faithful likeness of the Shah, with the curious adornment of a necklace of pawn tickets. There was an immediate remonstrance, to which the management opposed the explanation that Mr Corri really couldn't help himself. He was naturally so dark, and habitually wore a moustache. What he did not habitually wear was a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, a turban, and so forth. Corri is known, in fact, to have made a careful and intimate study of the Shah. The management promised to tone down the picture, but went no further than to introduce to the stage a bucket labelled "Whitewash for Corri." Apparently the Lord Chamberlain's office was content to have given *Kissi-Kissi* a bold advertisement, as in the case of *Vert-Vert* at the St James's Theatre. The dresses of a ballet having been adversely criticised—it was, in fact, the can-can, which was denounced in *Vanity Fair* and led to a libel action, which the paper won—the late Richard Mansell demurely asked for a suggestion as to their alteration; and, having received a word of advice, announced that the ballet would henceforth be danced in costumes designed by the Lord Chamberlain. His indifference to authority was eventually punished by his banishment from London, as a responsible manager, at any rate, for a term of many years.

Another burlesque, at the Gaiety, provoked the wrath of another sunburnt sovereign. In *Don Juan* there was a suggestion of a Grand Vizier on a round of the town. Quickly,

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George Edwardes was brought to book, and the character was modified out of all likeness to its original. Perhaps the revision of the play robbed it of its charm. Certain it is that the life of *Don Juan*, in which Cissie Loftus made her stage debut as the sweetest Haidee, was short; and Mr Edwardes chose this moment for the parting of the ways. Modern musical comedy replaced the form of burlesque which Hollingshead quaintly associated with a "sacred lamp." A second time the Sublime Porte was concerned with a piece of much popularity in the provinces called *Secrets of the Harem*. The proprietor met the case by simply reducing the title to *Secrets*.

George Edwardes was called over the coals again in respect of "Owen Hall's" original book of *The Gaiety Girl*. The censor objected to many lines, and to the description of a judge as Mr Justice May—it was so nearly Jeune. A rearrangement was effected at the eleventh hour—or later; and the actors forgot to forget. So the first-night audience really heard the unexpurgated edition at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

It was playing with fire to touch even gently on Sir George Lewis, but this was done on several occasions, notably in *Marriage*, at the Court Theatre. Arthur Roberts was quickly stopped in a caricature of Lord Randolph Churchill—*I'm a Regular Randy, Pandy Oh*.

Throughout his career Irving was an easy mark for the mimic. Probably Edward Righton set the fashion, with a travesty of *The Bells*, in a burlesque called *Christabelle*, at the Court Theatre, proceeding immediately to "take off" Mademoiselle Sara, otherwise "Wiry Sal," the cancan dancer. Sal, by the way, was Miss Wright, an original member of

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Colonna's troupe, who became, "on her own," the town toast. In *Richelieu Redressed*, produced at the Olympic on the eve of a General Election in 1873, and declaring that "In the great lexicon of politics there's no such word as truth," Righton again attacked Irving, and so it went on to the day of the great actor's death—then still continued. Irving detested mimicry, and is understood to have invoked the aid of authority to suppress it in the case, again, of Fred Leslie and *Ruy Blas*. There was an audacious *pas de quatre*, with Ben Nathan as Toole, Fred Storey as Edward Terry and Charles Danby as Wilson Barrett.

Some men have taken caricature as a compliment. Incredible as it may seem, a well-known city man was delighted to be identified with the philandering old fool, Lionel Roper, in *The Mind the Paint Girl*, and used to make up parties of his friends to contemplate his degradation. Whether Sir Arthur Pinero or Mr Dion Boucicault was really guilty of the photography, deponent sayeth not. The old clergyman, a friend of the Hawtrey family, caricatured in *The Private Secretary*, never missed a chance of seeing the Reverend Robert Spalding.

In the Adelphi melodrama, *London Day by Day*, one recalls Lord Ailesbury; in later Drury Lane dramas the Duchess of Montrose, Sam Lewis the money-lender, Carlton Blythe, a once well-known man about town, the Duke of Beaufort, and Marie Lloyd—who was first asked to impersonate herself.

That what are called "character studies" often have originals, deliberately chosen, or unconsciously, is certain. Edward Terry was once asked by a barrister friend to come over to the Law Courts and look at Dick Phenyl, a derelict

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who was believed by his colleagues to have provided the actor with his original. Terry protested his ignorance, just as he assured me that he was ignorant of the likeness of his Egerton Bompas in *The Times* to a well-known newspaper proprietor. It was dog eating dog when Willie Edouin "took off" Augustus Harris in *Our Flat*, and history repeating itself when, at Chelsea lately, a sketch introducing half the Government was suppressed.

Sir Arthur Pinero has a clever drawing by Frank Lockwood, recording and forgiving an accidental likeness to a member of his family, I think in *The Cabinet Minister*.

CHAPTER XXII

ONE-HORSE SHOWS

Some Popular Entertainers — *Cheer, Boys, Cheer* — “Protean” Artists—Henry Irving as a Spiritualist—Frederick Maccabe—Death in the Workhouse

WITH the recent death of Barclay Gammon a long line in the succession of “entertainers” is broken. Miss Margaret Cooper, the Clapham music teacher who took one step to celebrity, may be considered, “with a difference.” Mr Gammon curiously recalled Corney Grain in appearance, in manner and in method—but commanded ten times his fees. Grain would do a good deal for a ten-pound note, having precautiously made his way to his host’s in overshoes, with the assistance of a bus. He left but a modest fortune, though his death made a void, in the affection of the public, as great as his own unwieldy form. His mild and trivial humour, his extra-deliberate satire, his ingenuous dogmatism, his invariable propriety made up a pleasant and even fascinating personality. He would caricature an old gentleman proposing the toast of the Queen at great length, and then, with serious importance, remark, as his biographer records, with unsmiling approval: “Would it not be just as loyal, and much more satisfactory, if chairmen were simply to rise and say: ‘I give you the toast of the Queen, God bless her.’”

No doubt Barclay Gammon’s frequent engagements at the

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Palace Theatre, for which he got upwards of a hundred pounds a week toward the end of his brief career, reacted upon his "society" work, increasing the number of his engagements and the amount of his fees. So, George Grossmith was an entertainer on a very modest scale before he went to the Savoy. When he became an entertainer again, with the cachet of Gilbert and Sullivan, he quickly amassed five and twenty thousand pounds. His unkindly boasting of his prosperity provoked from Charles Brookfield, who could never make, or keep, money, a cruel comment, in the Beefsteak Club: "But, George, we don't all look so damned funny in evening dress."

Foote, with his Afternoon Teas, at the Haymarket Theatre, was probably the first of the entertainers. The elder Mathews seems to have had uncanny skill in rapid and complete disguises for his characters. Albert Smith deprecated what he called the "ducking business" as exemplified in Mr William Woodin's *Carpet Bag*. The artist would "duck" behind his table to make the necessary change in his appearance. Smith's own method in *The Ascent of Mont Blanc* seems to have been preserved for us in Mr R. G. Knowles's charmingly illustrated travel lectures. Henry Russell, a splendid veteran, was quite a familiar figure in London of the eighties, although he was singing *Cheer, Boys, Cheer* to Crimean recruits. Russell composed the music; the words were by Charles Mackay, who adopted Marie Corelli, the daughter of an old friend, educating her for a musician; and who also lived, poor and blind, into his seventy-sixth year. John Parry was the model of the Grossmiths, the Cecils (for Arthur Cecil began his professional career in this manner too), the Corney Grains. He enjoyed a tremendous

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vogue, and is discussed by contemporary critics among the most important musical and dramatic artists of the day. His most famous song was :

“ Wanted a governess, fitted to fill
The post of tuition with competent skill
In a gentleman’s family highly genteel,
Where ’tis hoped that the lady will try to conceal
Any fanciful airs or fears she may feel
In this gentleman’s family, highly genteel ! ”

Dickens wrote *Village Coquettes* for Parry and his company.

Most of the early music hall performers tried the “ entertainment.” It enabled them to appeal in Corn Exchanges, Assembly Rooms, and such like, to audiences that would not dream of visiting music halls then. So Cowell, Mackney, Vance, Arthur Lloyd, Harry Liston, and even Leybourne went on tour. I have a vivid memory of Clarence Holt, who used to do “ a night with Shakespeare and Dickens ”—Mr Bransby Williams’s method is somewhat similar. Holt’s good-night speech ended :

“ Of their immortal plumage may
The feathers never moult.
Your kind applause give Shakespeare, Dickens,
Not forgetting Clarence Holt.”

Vance, one recalls, used to work up a “ swell ” song with the use of many handkerchiefs. Each, as it was lightly used, was thrown away. On the last he paused. When he opened it, it proved to be the Union Jack—no unworthy use for that ; roars of applause ! And then, in an anticlimax of sordid economy, a page boy would carefully collect the silk or linen with which the stage had been recklessly strewn.

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Husband and wife would work together, as Mr and Mrs German (as Miss Priscilla Horton she had been an exquisite Ariel), Mr and Mrs Howard Paul, Mr and Mrs Harry Clifton. Two brothers, the Wardropers, utilised their likeness effectively; and two sisters, members of the Robertson family, whose tag was :

“ Amid your kind applause we now retire.
Accept the grateful thanks of Annie and Sophia.”

Some little time ago there was an outbreak of so-called “ Protean ” art in the London music halls. I believe its exponents were extremely well paid. Their leader, Fregoli, had a good deal of ingenuity and skill. He was an ugly little wretch, who, like many Italians, spoke English worse each day of his sojourning in our hospitable city. Other Protean artists appeared in rapid fashion, till music hall programmes became a tiresome procession of gibbering foreigners, who leapt from one mask into another, out by this door, in at that ; their characters were incompletely drawn, their antics unintelligible.

Men with memories asked : “ What has become of Frederick Maccabe ? ” and the answer proved to be that he was dying in Liverpool Workhouse, from which he was rescued. The facility with which not less than a dozen men whose name is cut deep into the record of popular entertainment during the Victorian era found this refuge is remarkable.

Maccabe was a Liverpool boy of Irish origin, whose first professional work was to play the piano, on which he had painfully acquired proficiency, in sheer love of music, at dances and dinners. So he acquired many of the characters which he afterwards depicted with such skill. Forty-mile

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walks between engagements were the healthy and not unhappy experience of many a young artist in those days.

In the early sixties Maccabe was a stock actor at Manchester. So was Henry Irving, and the two men, as an outside adventure, took the local Athenæum, where they gave an entertainment designed to kill, by caricature, the spiritualistic pretensions of the notorious Brothers Davenport. Maccabe soon found his *métier* as an entertainer. He was a skilful ventriloquist, and has left a treatise on the art ; he had a useful facility with his pen in literary and musical composition, could play many instruments, and would with lightning rapidity change from a pompous after-dinner speaker to a simpering girl at the piano, from a deplorable street-whistler to a gay troubadour, all vivid and convincing. Each sketch was a polished gem, and he could weave four characters into a play as illusory and convincing as though it employed four people. To tell Mr R. A. Roberts that he comes next in one's estimation to Maccabe is not to pay that brilliant artist a second-class compliment, but to confer upon him the highest distinction that seems possible now.

CHAPTER XXIII

EMPIRE-BUILDING

The All-Conquering Music Hall—Edward Moss's Boyhood—How a Piano was procured—His Vast Fortune, and Early Death

IN the entertainment of the provinces, the growth in popularity of the music hall has effected a complete revolution. It has ruined most of the theatres. It has killed the travelling circus. It has bereft a thousand Corn Exchanges, Town Halls, Mechanics Institutes of panoramas, prestidigitators, Christy Minstrels—having absorbed them all. There is now no town so small as to lack its Empire. Large cities have a score of variety theatres.

In 1878 the evolution of the music hall had hardly begun. The date is not written on my heart—rather it is cut into my back. For at sixteen, just emancipated from a “mortar board,” and vainly dedicated to the profession of the law, I thought I was old enough to visit a Palace of Varieties; my father thought I was still young enough to thrash!

Harry Rickards—“Great,” of course—had sung of the beautiful Cerulea. He sang also of “a virgin, just nineteen years old,” but her story is not for these pages. Vesta Tilley, a celebrity in her teens, also appeared, and a curiously versatile Frenchman, M. Trewey, mime, juggler, prestidigitator, who revisited London some five and twenty years later with the first cinematograph pictures. They were rejected as a Sunday-school show, of ridiculous pretensions, finally taken in at the Polytechnic Institution. Trewey, full of

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faith, told me I would live to see the cinema actually reproducing an event on the stage within forty-eight hours. The good fellow said hours—not minutes !

In the provinces the music hall grew quicker, or at any rate more luxuriantly, than in London—though at Manchester it encountered terrible opposition, the Nonconformist conscience possessing the local Bench. Still, Birmingham, Liverpool and Glasgow soon had great pleasure palaces, wherein the eventual “magnates” of the music hall world, the Stolls, the De Freeces, the Barrasfords, graduated. Paul, of Leicester, was a great “character,” who gave immense sums to charity. He habitually addressed his audience on Saturday night, in laudation of his company. Feeling that he had gone a little too far on one occasion, and tended to give the artists too high an opinion of their worth, he added, in a confidential way : “ But I’ve got a crowd coming on Monday, ladies and gentlemen, as can wipe the floor with this lot.” Oddly enough, the most important, or the most apparent influence, came from Edinburgh.

For years James Moss adventured shows of all kinds, and soon he found his son, Horace Edward Moss, a useful assistant. The boy had a particular aptitude at music, and played the piano for a “troupe” which had painful vicissitudes. The Franco-German War of 1870-1871 brought about a change in the fortunes of the Mosses. They concocted a panorama which put them in possession of a little capital. And still, they were careful. This advertisement proved most attractive to the musical member of the firm :

“ *Glenburn Abbey*—An old piano by Clementini in tolerably good order for its age. Mr MacAlister will give it to any person who will take it away.”

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A conveyance, fitting the circumstances, was procured ; and the piano went into the Moss stock. Father and son entered into possession of the Queen's Rooms, Greenock, and transformed them into a music hall. They seemed on the way to success when the landlord, enamoured of their ideas, resumed possession, by virtue of a faulty lease. The conventions of melodrama demand that he should fail. He did. The Mosses got hold of another hall, this time at Edinburgh. It was the Gaiety, but the fact that every student in the University affectionately knew it as " Moss's " is a proof that it was a success on homely lines. Long after its more active director had given Edinburgh an Empire, he retained the hall wherein he had laid the foundation of a vast fortune. He associated himself with another enterprising impresario in the north of England, Richard Thornton, and eventually with Oswald Stoll, whose methods were probably too individual, and who, after a time, withdrew from the coalition.

Meanwhile Moss had established his enterprise in the heart of London. The Hippodrome, off Leicester Square, is the base from which upwards of thirty other places of amusement are operated, in all parts of the kingdom, employing a capital in excess of two million pounds. At fifty-seven, he died in harness—long weary of work, if the truth must be told. His domestic life had more than its share of sorrows. Otherwise his career was successful, almost from the outset. He had acquired an immense and beautiful estate in Scotland. He had accumulated a vast fortune—nearly a quarter of a million, and procured a title. A pleasure-loving man, there is no doubt he had long desired to dissociate himself from the business of popular entertainment, and to devote himself to country life, and travel. Incidentally, the Hippodrome

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had been something of a disappointment. The belief that the London public was eager for a revival of the circus proved to be unfounded. At any rate, it did not wax enthusiastic in respect of a circus, plus an Empire ballet, plus an unvarying water show, plus a variety entertainment. Time seems to have solved this problem with the revue.

None the less, at the time of Mr Stoll's severance, the Moss Empires were in the doldrums. The shareholders were uneasy, but cherished a belief in the founder of the undertaking. And so, with admirable good nature, he took the helm again, and stuck to it, till painful illness seized him, and, after no great while, bore him off. Sir Edward Moss was a keen man of business. He showed capacity in many enterprises apart from the music hall ; business, no doubt, meant to him primarily his own enrichment. But he had pleasantry and charm. His was one of those cases in which the manners of a gentleman had fallen gracefully on a person of humble origin and roughish experience.

CHAPTER XXIV

NOTES—OR GOLD ?

Failure of the Royal English Opera—Palace Theatre Flotation—Its Early Struggles, and Eventual Profits—Living Pictures—And one of Charles Morton

“ **H**E built his soul a lordly pleasure house.” With unctious the musical critics passed the quotation round, when they inspected the Royal English Opera House, dominating Seven Dials. It was meant to establish English music ; to give London a theatre as nearly perfect, from all points of criticism, as might be—in beauty, in secure isolation, in equipment. As the late Mr D’Oyly Carte, by the inspiration of Madam, was one of the most astute men of business in his generation, or any other—he died worth two hundred and fifty thousand pounds—I doubt not the Royal English Opera House also enshrined other intentions.

It opened on 31st January 1891, with Sir Arthur Sullivan’s opera, *Ivanhoe*. Artists of rare distinction were engaged, in such a number that a different cast might be employed three times within the week. Immediately after the one hundred and fiftieth performance, *Ivanhoe* was withdrawn. The Opera House had failed in its mission, as regards English music. To France, then, for *La Basoche*, which an enthusiastic critic declared to be “the best comic opera ever produced in London.” It did little better than *Ivanhoe*. So the

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hospitality of the theatre was tendered to Sarah Bernhardt for a season.

Poor English Opera House ! In little more than a year they were bravely planning to raise a music hall out of the debris of its ambitions. For this purpose a limited liability company was formed, with the privilege of purchasing the theatre, freehold and paraphernalia, for the equivalent of two hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds.

Augustus Harris entered into the scheme with enthusiasm. His energy was limitless. Drury Lane was the rock on which he built his enterprise ; but it included Italian Opera, in which, shouting at the chorus in four languages, he found his greatest delight ; touring companies, the world over, with melodrama, pantomime, grand opera, comic opera ; Olympia. And he kept an eye on every detail. Hales, a Covent Garden tradesman, specialised in the provision of animals for theatrical productions—packs of hounds for *Cinderella*, horses for *Henry V.*, bulls for *Carmen*, sheep for *Bo-Peep*, and so on. Harris was doing a *Forty Thieves* pantomime, for which he needed a donkey. Sedger at the Lyric was doing *La Cigale*, for which he also needed a donkey. Hales had a superior and an inferior beast, and juggled with them a little. Harris would return from the Continent, his eye all over Drury Lane stage in an instant. “Where’s that infernal Hales”—his voice would ring through the theatre—“where’s that infernal Hales ? Sedger’s got my donkey again !”

Harris had a deep-rooted belief in his power to run a music hall. He had cleared out of the Empire in a temper. He found the notion of resuscitating the Palace fascinating. Perhaps there was a touch of malicious pleasure in knocking the bottom out of the Royal English Opera House. He

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shaped a programme for the reopening, on 11th December 1892, which he supposed would revolutionise variety. It included an Oriental ballet, *The Sleeper Awakened*, which was actually the induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, a little tragedy called *The Round Tower* and an extravaganza by Cecil Raleigh and "Jimmie" Glover, called *London to Paris*. There were a few music hall artists ; but the effect of the policy of other halls, in cornering popular favourites, was felt keenly. It was a long time ere the Palace directorate awoke to the fact that, to succeed, it must discover and exploit interesting personalities.

Then the first manager of the Palace was oddly out of place. Harris was doubtless anxious to pay a debt of old friendship to a man who had done fine work in his time and failed. The name of Charles Bernard will be found on the old programmes of the Canterbury and the Oxford. He had not a romantic appearance—short, thick-set ; an indispensable pince-nez surmounting a nose which an ardent love of boxing had broadened—but he had a beautiful voice, and was a notable contributor to Charles Morton's operatic selections. Then, for years, he was an active partner in the control of Bernard and Vestris's Christy Minstrels, still singing ballads. He became a power in the provinces, controlling theatres at Manchester, Dublin, Glasgow and Carlisle, and running companies with comic opera, and Shakespeare, of which he was an erudite and tasteful producer. I believe he claimed to have discovered Florence St John. It was another discovery that brought him to grief. Neither his strength nor his sympathies were with the Palace, from which he retired, to die in Hanwell !

It was a whirligig indeed which brought Bernard's old

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manager to the Palace as his successor. Morton's supremely valuable asset was the public belief in his capacity and in his luck. He was the figure-head of the Alhambra when it was resuscitated ; again, of the Tivoli. Surely enough, when he got to the Palace, things began to look up, though it has remained for that brilliant young showman, Alfred Butt, to bring the house to a monotonous routine of twenty thousand pounds to profit per year. To think that Palace shares have been quoted in pence !

Kilyany's Living Pictures marked the turn in the fortunes of the house. And of them, a curious story is to be told. There have been living pictures since the bad old days of Leicester Square. But Kilyany, a Viennese, I think, did them on an heroic scale—with perfect mechanism and naughty daring, but with exquisite effect. Kilyany's pictures were offered to the Alhambra, and contemptuously declined by the manager of the moment. Popular imagination accredited Morton with securing them for the Palace. But the joke is, they were the legacy, to his successors, of Augustus Harris. On the night of their production Morton stood in his accustomed place, at the back of the stalls, and watched one study of "the altogether" to another succeed, in terror. He cursed the living pictures, being sure there would be trouble with the authorities. So there was ; but it was not too serious for arrangement. Moreover, the Prince of Wales, who had known Morton since Philharmonic days, and permitted a good deal of familiarity, laughed at his terrors and told him the pictures would be the making of the house. Kilyany went to America and died.

Living pictures became a mania. Of course there was no monopoly in the idea. Any stage carpenter of genius

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could do the trick, and immediately there were living pictures at every music hall in town and country. The comic opera choruses were ranged for beauty, and some of the best-known actresses of the day could, as they would, confess to having aired their charms in these circumstances.

Harris left to Morton, or the Palace, another legacy—a genuine revue. Let that be scored up to his memory! While we are on the subject of revues, the very first was concocted by Mr Seymour Hicks and the late Charles Brookfield—*Under the Clock*, for the Court Theatre. It was a full generation before its time, and still infinitely superior to the rubbish to which we have been habituated in the meantime. But Brookfield's *Pal o' Archie* proved to be pretty poor stuff for the delectation of the new Palace audiences.

It was many months ere the living pictures lost their attractiveness, if they ever did. And, so far as the Palace was concerned, another attraction was immediately forthcoming—cinematograph pictures of curious excellence, produced by a machine called the American Biograph.

Charles Morton was, in those days, and for several years, one of the most familiar and respectable figures in London life. He had the air of a strayed banker—a snow-white wig, plentiful “mutton-chop” whiskers, a collar of the kind with which *Punch* endowed Gladstone, but which Gladstone never wore, a large bow-tie of shepherd's plaid, and an old-fashioned frock coat. His energy was remarkable—an eight-o'clock family breakfast in his suburban home was his insistence. He was an early arrival at the Palace, and “finicky” in business detail. He was obstinate in his views as to the value of a performance, declaring that no individual was worth more than a hundred pounds a week. No doubt he



Fryer

Callant Fight for the Championship of the WC District

Between the Champion and the Gintarban Pit

for Ten Thousand a Year"

LEFT TO RIGHT: CORRI, MUSICAL DIKEKTOR, AND EDWARD WESTON, PROPRIETOR OF THE ROYAL MUSIC HALL, HOLBORN; CHARLES MORTON, PROPRIETOR, AND JONGHMANS, MUSICAL DIRECTOR OF THE OXFORD MUSIC HALL

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was morally right ; but the market would be fatally against him nowadays. It is a pose of the modern music hall manager never to be seen without a cigar in his mouth. Charles Morton never smoked. He seemed to subsist on tea and bread and butter, served to him at intervals, wherever he might be in the theatre. His small allowance of whisky, shared with an intimate friend, but respectfully declined from any other source, was a nightly ritual. Then, he was nearly the last man to leave the theatre, his only interest apart from it being a love of horse-racing, very moderately encouraged, to the day of his death, at eighty-four. The events of his life had left a provokingly slight impression on his memory, as many a would-be recorder found.

His successor at the Palace was his long-time, watchful assistant, Alfred Butt, a young accountant who arrived from Harrod's in pursuit of his calling, and whose triumphant career has been punctuated by the "discovery," in succession, of such novel and attractive artists as sweet Rose Stahl, of Walter C. Kelly, of Margaret Cooper, of Maud Allan and of Pavlova. So comes the history of the Palace up to date.

CHAPTER XXV

FEVERISH FIRST NIGHTS

How a great Journalist died—The Marquis of Queensberry on Marriage — *Guy Domville* — Actors' Encounters with Audiences—Poet and Painter fight—An Interview with Queen Victoria

OFTEN within one's memory has the excitement attendant upon a first performance been increased by some unlooked-for incident. But that which was most tragical escaped the notice of the audience, save of a few—and they did not fully appreciate its force. Old friendship for the parties more particularly concerned—the Bancrofts especially, for whom, in a mistaken divagation to the stage, he wrote their one failure, *Tame Cats*—in Hare's revival of *Money*, at the Garrick Theatre, in 1894, was one of many inducements to Edmund Yates to witness the performance. He had been somewhat of an invalid, indeed, ever since his shameful imprisonment, for loyalty to a contributor to *The World*, the first of the society papers, as for years we knew them, though not the first, really. I think that distinction belonged to *The Owl*, and to Sir Algernon Borthwick. Yates always professed to hate the style "society" paper. As the theatre emptied after *Money* he was seen still sitting, apparently in his stall. He proved to have had a seizure, and to be helpless. He died at a neighbouring hotel, later in the night.

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Yates was for years in the Post Office—the Civil Service was the beginning of half-a-hundred popular journalists and novelists of that time. He was a prolific writer for magazines, and of popular fiction, and almost the first journalist to give the personal touch to his records. For this he incurred the enmity of Thackeray and lost his membership of the Garrick Club. He was one of the most engaging after-dinner speakers of our time ; an inspiring and fastidious editor. And the genius of the editor is rare. I have met it once in curious circumstances. If a deep hatred of “ the City ” and its ideals were not in my blood—a sense of unhappiness the instant and obstinate symptom produced by its miasmatic air—I could never have escaped the fascination exercised during two years of Harry Marks. No soldier in journalism could have an officer so concise and dependable in command, so diplomatic and charming in personal contact, so deft and simple in instruction, so cynically humorous in criticism, so studiously and generously appreciative. Back now to our first nights.

Never did Tennyson so completely prove that play-writing was not his *métier* as in the case of *The Promise of May*, which Mrs Bernard Beere produced at the Globe, in 1882. Successes he had had in the theatre, but it is an open secret that his manuscript was freely and skilfully manipulated at the Lyceum ; probably also at the St James's. Nobody had a good word for *The Promise of May*. Almost in his last hours, Tennyson recalled its first performance, declaring that “ They did not treat me fairly.” Had the play possessed any vitality the bold advertisement which that curious person, the Marquis of Queensberry, gave it might have procured it a longer run.

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Tennyson's "hero" justified a very sordid act of seduction by the exposition of his views on marriage—he was an agnostic, so styled. "Marriage!" said he. "Well, when the great democratic deluge which is slowly coming upon us, and upon all Europe shall have washed away thrones and churches, ranks, conditions and customs—marriage, one of the most senseless, among the rest—why then the man and the woman, being free to follow their elective affinities will each bid the old bond farewell, not with tears but with smiles, not with mutual recriminations but with mutual good wishes, with no dread of the world's gossip and no necessity for concealment; and the children—well, the State will bring up the children." And again, addressing his pretty prey: "Marriage! That feeble institution! Child, it will pass away with priestcraft from the pulpit into the crypt, into the abyss. For does not Nature herself teach us that marriage is against nature. Look at the birds—they pair for the season and part; but how merrily they sing! While marrying is like chaining two dogs together by the collar. They snarl and bite each other because there is no hope of parting."

At the third performance of *The Promise of May* the Marquis of Queensberry rose in his stall and protested. At the end of the act he rose again, meaning to address the audience at greater length, but he was gently removed. So, in a little while, was *The Promise of May*. Years later, when the Marquis of Queensberry was engineering the ruin of unhappy Oscar Wilde, they went in mortal terror lest he should create a disturbance at the St James's. He did not.

But the St James's Theatre contrived one all on its own account on the first night of Mr Henry James's *Guy Domville*, which the "popular" constituents of the audience fiercely

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hissed. There was an angry altercation between Sir George Alexander and the gallery boys, which he continued, in spite of their assurance that they "had nothing against him." The parrot cry of organised opposition was raised, and a newer one—that of unfriendliness to America! Mr Henry James has forgotten and forgiven anyhow, for he took out papers of naturalisation the other day, for the deliberate profession of loyal friendship and devotion to this country. It is probable that few of the protestants against him appreciated the literary distinction of the author—that any felt it should affect their attitude towards his play, or stopped to think of his nationality. They found the play distasteful, and did no more than adopt their time-honoured method of expressing their opinion. William Terriss, writing me about this time, declared the right of the "popular" playgoer—in his friendly mood avowed by managers to be the very prop and mainstay of the theatre—to speak ill, as he spoke well. "I have paid my good money," said Terriss as an imaginary dissentient, "and I have a right to say frankly what I think of what I get in return." The *Guy Domville* controversy was carried on for weeks. The play had a career no longer.

Once only did Irving endanger that curious sense of amity between him and his audience which always pervaded the Lyceum—elsewhere, we have known a fashion of adulation, or a vulgar homeliness of friendship, or the green-sick admiration of the "matinee girl." The quiet communion between Irving and the Lyceum audience was different; so were his speeches—the little pose of hesitancy, the generous sweep, part hospitality and part appeal, of that wonderful hand, the few suave sentences. There was an expression of anger from the pit one night, a petulant retort from the actor: "There

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is something here I do not understand to-night." Then understanding came, in a flash of inspiration, that he had made a mistake, and as quickly he repaired his error.

When Mortimer's adaptation of *La Dame aux Camélias* was first done at the Princess's, as *Heartsease*, it was a failure, though Modjeska afterwards procured it a certain vogue. The audience hissed the original version. Sturdy old William Rignold begged the protestants to remember that they had wives, and sisters and daughters. His curious plea was not in respect of Marguerite—but of Helen Barry, her stage representative. It was allowed to pass. But when G. W. Anson sought to play the pedagogue to the audience which hissed Wilkie Collins's *Rank and Riches* at the Adelphi, he exceeded its patience, and ten years' banishment to the colonies was his fate—that is to say, he preferred the Australian to the London stage for so long, though his reception, when he reappeared at the Court Theatre, in G. W. Godfrey's *Parvenu*, showed that his error had been completely forgotten—if ever it had been seriously held in remembrance.

James Albery lost his head badly when *Jacks and Jills* was hissed at the Vaudeville in 1880, and I think on that occasion, coined that blessed phrase, "organised opposition." When *Where's the Cat*, adapted by the same author, was badly received, a little later, at the Criterion, Sir Charles Wyndham, always willing to break a lance in such a cause, affected to believe that the audience was still vindictive towards Albery, and apologised for him, an act which Albery angrily repudiated.

It is difficult for the lay mind to grasp the importance of a simple scenic effect, say to a Drury Lane melodrama, when an ill-oiled wheel will rob of its effect a sensation which might

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mean a fortune; or, do worse—reveal a simple subterfuge and make the whole ridiculous. In *Strathlogan*, a good, average melodrama done at the Princess's, there was a whirlpool. Had it worked, it would have been a town's talk. But it stuck; we saw a heroine who had been flung into a torrent sitting on a sordid, wooden wheel. It needed oil, or the stage hands needed oil. It hopped, and skipped, and stood still again—always a wheel. The audience shouted with laughter. Scott saw the text for a funny column in *The Telegraph*: and the play was ruined.

Probably the most amusing first-night row within the memory of modern playgoers is that which occurred after the performance of *The Coquette* at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in the spring of 1899. Hans Lowenfeld then directed that theatre. He is a Czech, with a genius for figures. He ran one big bucket shop after another, and became rich. He tried to make another fortune on the side by the exploitation of a temperance drink which it was declared no toper could distinguish from ale. As no one ever drank enough of it to make a fly drunk, we are still without a valuable opinion in confirmation of Hans (or Henry) Lowenfeld's: His attitude towards the drama was conceived in the spirit of that of the late Henry Brougham Farnie. It is projected in *Les Contes Marins*. Not satisfied with the reception of *The Coquette*, Lowenfeld appeared before the curtain and expressed his determination to "have it out" with the "dissentient voices," as the reporters call them, in the gallery. He reviled them, and got his own back. Then there was a saving inflection of humour in the interchange. Lowenfeld, with, I suspect, a little blood other than Czech in his veins, in a piteous voice, disclosed the cost of *The Coquette*, and who

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should know better ? There was a kind of handshake across the footlights, and it was all over.

Of another amusing scene at the theatre I was curiously the immediate receptacle of the opposing accounts. During an *entr'acte* of Pettitt's *A Million of Money*, at Drury Lane, in the autumn of 1890, there was a collision between "Jimmy" Whistler and Augustus Moore, at that time editing *The Hawk*, which naturally got a page of vivacious paragraphs out of the incident. Moore declared that Whistler, whom he described with minute insolence, cried : "Hawk ! Hawk ! Hawk !" touched him with a tiny cane, and was promptly knocked down. Friends intervened. Moore returned to his stall, and Whistler retired. So much for Moore's version.

Whistler made his way to the office of *The Sunday Times*, being an intimate of the staff of that day. He certainly bore no evidence of having been knocked down—nothing showed signs of damage but his stick. He declared that he had reproached Moore with an attack on the memory of his dead friend—Godwin, the architect, whose widow he married—and that he got in two smashing blows. Indeed, I do not think either was a penny the worse.

Robert Buchanan, who had the habit of borrowing play-material from great folk, then, reviling his benefactors—he called Fielding "a dirty old ruffian," I believe—resentfully told me that when he was writing *Dick Sheridan* he bought a volume of *Sheridan's Bon Mots*, and was forced to the conclusion that the misrepresented wit had left him little material for dialogue. Certainly the Sheridan of the play was a very dull dog. But how many men, according to their contemporaries brilliant and spontaneous, have been ungenerous to posterity ! We have about half-a-dozen threadbare stories

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of H. J. Byron, for instance ; fewer of Whistler—whom I suspect to have been painfully elaborate in impromptu. From time to time he would present himself at *The Sunday Times* office with the intention of contributing one of his letters to the editor. We kept the famous butterfly signature in stock. He would be enclosed in a room for hours, and emerge with twenty lines. The floor one would find knee-deep in spoiled sheets. Whistler was at that time deeply interested in a little paper called *The Whirlwind*, but it was short-lived.

Of *The Hawk*—its story has been told a hundred times—I would merely say that it is a poor monument of Moore's genius. He was a brilliant journalist—none thought of him more highly than Edmund Yates, and who should be a better judge ? Moore had education, a curiously tenacious memory, the knack of vivid, interesting narrative, a tender fancy and a correct style in verse. He could be a charming companion and a loyal friend. It is fate that links his memory with *The Hawk*—an obsession of mischievousness and savagery that represented but six years' work in a career extending over thirty. His proudest achievement was an interview with Queen Victoria, which appears in *The World* at the time of her Diamond Jubilee. To have written a "Celebrity at Home" for *The World* was the cachet of every journalist engaged in these exercises in intrusion. Yates did the first few himself, to set a style, which he insisted on as a model—it was perfect, in its extent and in its limitations. There must be so much topography, so much biography, so much portraiture. When the Prince of Wales was approached for a sitting he agreed, feeling so safe. Dr "Billy" Russell was the operator.

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Queen Victoria, of course, was never personally approached. But Moore had half-a-score of note-books on the personalities and environment of the great, besides the inexhaustible pigeon-holes of his brain. He had a genius for creating an atmosphere. And his most unfriendly colleague—Heaven knows how he made so many of them, unless it was by injudicious loans—was bound to admit the ingenuity and gripping interest of the result.

Robert Buchanan was a brutal critic, and seemed to love a quarrel. He was, in fact, a generous-hearted and lovable man. For dramatic critics in general, and for Clement Scott in particular, he avowed bitter contempt. At the invitation of his collaborator, Harry Murray—my oldest colleague, I think, in London journalism—I attended the last performance of *A Society Butterfly*, by Mrs Langtry, at the Opera Comique, on the mysterious promise of a sensation. Buchanan appeared before the curtain and uttered a wild attack on Scott, in the hope that it would lead to an action for libel, but it fell flat.

There have been these outbursts impugning the good faith of criticism throughout the history of the stage. Mr Arthur Bouchier, in the early days of his management at the Garrick, set his hand to the work of an imagined reform. By the hand of his manager he circulated a statement of his intention to have no more first-night notices. He would appoint a later night for the attendance of the recorders. And soon he circulated, in his very own handwriting, a very charming note of withdrawal from a contest that had proved unequal. "They can't do without *uth*," said Mr Sleary.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME EDITORS

A Famous Philanderer—Practical John Hollingshead—His Gaiety Confession—The Marquis de Leuville—Augustus Harris and Literature—Edward Ledger as Lucullus

WHAT a curious *ménage* was that of *The Sunday Times*, in the days of the Whistler visitations ! Its editor was the late Phil Robinson, who had persuaded a charming lady, his fellow-passenger on a homeward voyage from Australia, to devote, to the purchase of the paper from the Fitzgeorges—the children, by a morganatic marriage with a famous ballet dancer, of the Duke of Cambridge—a few of the thousands she had romantically made out of a gold mine. Robinson rarely visited the office, preferring to encourage his fellow-members of the Savage Club in steeplechases round the dining-room, which caused the committee grave concern. His reputation mainly rested on a book called *My Indian Garden*. I heard him accept, without a hint of humorous qualification, the assurance that he was “the greatest naturalist since Oliver Goldsmith.”

Fourteen members of the Savage formed the staff of *The Sunday Times*, each being appointed Editor of his Department, with orders to act independently, but especially to disregard the unhappy acting editor. Sometimes the paper was interesting ; sometimes it seemed to lack homogeneity. It was

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generally very late in arrival at the press-room. Acting charades was a diversion not unknown to Saturday night.

On one of Phil Robinson's rare editorial visits to the office he brought an important paragraph :

“We are informed that Mr Augustus Fitzbattleaxe has been appointed editor of *The West End Wit*, but as our informant is Mr Fitzbattleaxe there is certainly not a word of truth in the statement.”

Probably my persuasion, long continued, till it secured the omission of the paragraph, saved our proprietress much trouble. But the story soon travelled, and lost me the friendship of Fitzbattleaxe, who furiously protested that we “might comfortably have cut up a thousand” had I connived at the libel and an eventual action. Cutting up thousands under similar conditions has reduced poor Fitzbattleaxe to the gutter now.

In early life Phil Robinson had written a thousand or so leading articles for *The Daily Telegraph*, all which had been carefully pasted on sheets of foolscap for him and pigeon-holed. His theory was that the calendar suggested an article every day, for a term of years—“Oyster season begins” ; “St Swithin's Day” ; “Charles I. beheaded, 1649,” and so on. And he just used his erudite and charming essays over and over again, bestowing no pains on their correction. So we frequently received, at *The Sunday Times* office, letters of angry remark, caused by his citation of people dead since the original publications—for instance, he would write, of some *viveur* in the shades, “Jolly old So-and-So presided, as he has done for years.”

Sir Edwin Arnold wrote :

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“DEAR PHIL,—I always read your delightful articles in *The Sunday Times*, often feeling that I recognise an old friend; to-day, a near relation indeed. The Lieutenant seems (see enclosed) to have bagged spoil appertaining to the Ancient. Yours,
E. A.”

The keeper of Robinson's scrapbook had carelessly included a few specimens of the work of other contributors to *The Telegraph*, and he had on this occasion reproduced an article of his old editor's.

Robinson vainly sought to establish half-a-dozen papers. Most vivacious was *The Cuckoo*, a daily-evening imitation of *The World*. Phil read the proofs of the last issue on the ledge of the fountain in the Temple. The brokers had locked him out of the office—for once, he had not recognised their indulgence with the punctiliousness they expected of an old friend. Phil Robinson could be as vicious as he was charming. Henry Murray's best novel, *A Song of Sixpence*, appeared in *The Sunday Times*, in instalments, and if on occasion Murray had not proved amenable to Robinson's interminable demands on his friendship, a proof of the week's feuilleton would be called for and elaborately decorated with the editorial blue pencil before the suffering eyes of the novelist.

An occasional visitor to the office of *The Sunday Times* was John Hollingshead, whom I got to know extremely well. He was then nearing seventy, broken in fortune but vigorous in health, back to the calling of his youth, when he was a careful and much esteemed member of Dickens's staff on *Household Words*. His hair was plentiful and white; his complexion florid, his dress scrupulously neat—the cleanest-looking old man I ever encountered. He would take a

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commission for an article, make definite arrangements as to terms, and bring back, to the minute, the exact amount of manuscript agreed upon, in his own neat handwriting. I believe that in his largest undertakings he had never employed assistance, mechanical or other, in his correspondence, and rarely made a written contract. When he did so, it had mostly led to a misunderstanding, otherwise unknown. He used to utter strong opinions in a high-pitched voice—and that expresses his literary method too.

Hollingshead could surely have written a profoundly interesting volume of reminiscences. He preferred a saltless hotchpotch of dates and instances, declaring to his intimates that his life has been devoid of scandalous experience—even at the Gaiety—and that, at any rate, it would be a point of honour with him, to the end, to make no “revelations.”

One Sunday in the country, as we set out for a drive, he hammered at the closed door of a public-house, demanding an unneeded pint of ale. When it was refused he uttered a set speech against the licensing laws. Farther along he hammered at the door of a hairdresser and asked to be shaved, though he had scraped *à velours* before we set out. Another refusal, another diatribe against Sunday observance. John felt that he had now fulfilled his obligations to society, and for the rest of the day was a pleasant and charming companion.

Once, in a restaurant, Hollingshead asked the German proprietor to tell him the composition of a dish. The man “didn’t know.” Said Hollingshead, rather angrily: “But you sell it.” “Ja, Ja,” was the reply, “I sell lots of moock dot I don’t eat.” John softened to a smile. “I ran the Gaiety on those lines for twenty years,” he agreed. He was

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always harping on the more distinguished plays which alternated with burlesque there, and almost ignored, for his personal entertainment, some of his lighter productions. Once, in his office, Charles Collette spoke of the "damned bad play" then current. "The damned good play," corrected Hollingshead. "I don't believe you've really seen it, governor," Collette ventured. "You're quite right," said Hollingshead; "but I've seen to-night's returns."

Still he was very sensitive behind his cynicism, and when W. S. Gilbert once spoke in pity of the authors who had to "write down to the level of a Gaiety audience" Hollingshead retorted that Gilbert must be held to have set that level, since he wrote the first Gaiety burlesque. It was *Robert the Devil*.

A persistent *Sunday Times* caller was the Marquis de Leuville, a weird creature of whom rumour said that he had been an assistant at Truefit's. Certainly his oiled and curled hair and beard gave colour to this story. He was undoubtedly the favourite of a very wealthy widow, prevented by the terms of her husband's will from marrying again. She had bought her faithful servant the title of Marquis, from goodness knows where, and Wardour Street had been ransacked to fill his chambers with articles of bigotry and virtue. Here he used to entertain lavishly. Willie Wilde, a clever, witty, fascinating man, who was overshadowed by his brother's fame, and eventually overwhelmed by his disgrace, would often lead the revel. De Leuville wrote preposterous poetry, then made a round of the newspapers till he could hire one to print his trash. He left in his trail a scent of attar of roses, which for days would even overcome that faint odour of putrid paste inseparable from the room of every sub-editor earnestly employed.

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Augustus Harris was the next owner of *The Sunday Times*, with Willing, the advertising agent, for his partner. Willing at one time had a mania for putting his name to plays which John Douglass, of the Standard Theatre, really wrote and produced. Willing became so casual, in this respect, that in the earlier hours of a first night bold spirits would pin him to the wall in the bar, and defy him to describe the course, say, of the third act.

Harris's purchase of *The Sunday Times* was not unconnected with his own play-writing. He wrote a series of articles, which duly appeared in the paper, and of which the manuscript was carefully preserved as a proof, in case of need, of his ability to write, should dramatic authors, for instance, ever seek to maintain that he did not take a very active part in the construction of the plays to which he always insisted on attaching his name as part author, taking his proportion of the fees.

He certainly did suggest much of the incident in the Drury Lane dramas. His secretaries would suddenly be called upon to take notes of plots that might have filled the dimensions of a Chinese tragedy. He teemed with ideas, usually at the wrong moment. In the roof of his Soho Square house, once a convent, Charles Alias, the costumier, has a secret study, a low-roofed, old-world apartment, where he puts on a velvet thinking cap and secludes himself.

Plans for the Drury Lane pantomime hung fire one year. Alias attacked the manager in a weak spot—breakfast-time, at the Elms, his beautiful St John's Wood home. He begged for instructions that would permit him to go ahead with the pantomime. Harris, in his detached way, drew pictures on the tablecloth, then, after an interval, said: "Do you know

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what I think of doing next year, Charlie ? ” It was too much ! The costumier exploded. “ Next year ! You say next year, ha ? Well, say next year just once more, I go up to my top room and, by God ! I never come down no more.”

Harris’s late breakfast was an amazing function—a city dinner, in fact, designed to “ make sure.” His feeding till he drove home again, at any hour in the morning, often with a club companion commandeered to a picnic, was casual. At one end of the huge dining-table were two or three secretaries, feeding him with a précis of his vast correspondence, and taking replies. A guest or two would share the other meal, listening to his quick, interesting talk. In the drawing-room an Italian tenor would wait a voice trial ; in the library a scenic artist would tenderly guard a tentative model of a transformation for possible approval, and possible metragobolisation. And then he would drive away to the theatre, arriving at three o’clock for a rehearsal which had probably been called for one, and listening to a passionate love scene the while an elderly lady was interviewing him for *Fashions and Foibles of the Fair*.

Harris made a distracting editor—his *alter ego* being his relative, Arthur à Beckett. There was a certain fitness in the situation, for E. T. Smith, a previous manager of Drury Lane, was a previous owner of *The Sunday Times*. But Harris had too many interests. He sold the paper, curiously enough, to a woman again, Mrs Beere ; and his overdrawn vitality failed soon after. Forty-four saw the great manager on his death-bed.

One might write a volume of the vicissitudes of this sturdy old newspaper. In the fifties the theatrical folk decided to invite a Sunday paper to become their representative organ.

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Choice lay finally between *The Sunday Times* and *The Era*. The latter accepted the position, eliminated its general and sporting news, and became the trade organ of the stage, at first under the direction of Frederick Ledger, then of his son, who sold it a few years ago, choosing the moment with that exceeding shrewdness which characterised all his actions. Sir William Bass gave a hundred (and a few odd) thousand pounds for the property, and Mr Ledger retired to the Gables, Hampstead—and to one of the finest collections of armour in the world.

It used to be his annual custom to entertain the theatrical celebrities of the day at dinner, and to commemorate the occasion by some Lucullan freak. He once had eighty strawberry plants carefully nurtured in pots, so that at dessert he might say to his guests, each opposite a blooming strawberry plant: "Now, my dear friends—gather your own fruit." The service seemed slow. Ledger cried to his man: "Come, come! The dessert?" "In a minute, sir!" was the reply. "*They've nearly picked the strawberries.*"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE WESTMINSTER AQUARIUM

Church and Stage—Labouchere as a Showman—Many Monsters—
Gymnastic Sensations—A Fight with the County Council—
M'Dougall

SOME curious assimilations of church and stage present themselves to the student of popular entertainment. Prior Raherus may be said to have sounded the note of variety when he established Bartholomew Fair, as a kind of charity bazaar, at the threshold of his priory, and took up his old trade of a jesting juggler to help things along. Certain historians of Westminster suggest that pilgrims to à Becket's shrine bade farewell to frivolity at the Canterbury Arms, which became the Canterbury Music Hall. The South London Music Hall was once a Catholic chapel. The Royal Music Hall, Holborn, absorbed a Methodist conventicle. *En revanche*, General Booth made the old Prince of Wales's Theatre into a Salvation hall; likewise the Grecian Theatre in City Road. The Surrey Theatre housed Spurgeon's flock when his Tabernacle was burnt.

But is there any spectacle so quaint as that of the Wesleyan Church House, built on the site of the Westminster Aquarium? For many years this dull and dingy glass house was pelted with stones of moral reprobation, but still endured, to enjoy a reputation for naughtiness wholly undeserved. The most one could ever say of it was that it had the soporific effect of

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the Crystal Palace without involving the most troublesome railway journey known to the civilised world.

And yet, when one comes to think of it, the Westminster Aquarium—its proper style was the Royal Aquarium and Summer and Winter Garden, Westminster—has, on occasions, provided thrilling experience. Its licence was constantly in peril on account of the dangerously sensational shows its management more and more affected. Still it is remarkable there was never a serious accident here, though some of the high divers contrived to kill themselves with celerity when they went elsewhere. Men were buried alive, and came up smiling. They starved for months, and appeared to thrive on it. They were hanged by the neck and suffered no inconvenience. They were petrified, boiled, roasted ; they cycled down precipitous declines, dropped hundreds of feet, and were no whit the worse.

It seems strange that such an establishment should have been opened by a royal prince, with a proper surrounding of the nobility, clergy and gentry. Yet so it was, just thirty years ago, while half-a-million gallons of sea-water moaned in its cavernous depths for fish that were never to come ; and the untilled gardens cared not whether it was winter or summer. A band which Arthur Sullivan recruited from the four corners of the earth, singers headed by Sims Reeves, an Art Exhibition organised by Millais, failed to attract. It is on record that the first entertainment in which the public displayed the slightest interest was that given by a French juggler and mime, Monsieur Trewey—not forgetting the edifying exhibition personally provided by the directorate, which quarrelled furiously, and continued to do so till the Aquarium and Summer and Winter Garden closed its doors for ever.

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Wybrow Robertson and Henry Labouchere, the actual promoters of the concern, were the plaintiff and defendant respectively in an action for libel. Labouchere won, but Robertson (who was the husband of beautiful Marie Litton) was more successful in retaining the management of the show, which he reconstituted, with Barnum for his model and G. A. Farini for his adviser. Farini was in early life a brilliant gymnast. He crossed Niagara on a tight rope, in succession to Blondin. He headed a wonderful party of aerial performers in the early days of the Alhambra; and he invented Lulu, a lovely girl, apparently, who was shot from a spring pedestal to a lofty platform. For years the secret was kept—till the sensation was quite worn out, in fact. Then Lulu stood revealed, a well-bearded youth, who was last heard of as a prosperous photographer in San Francisco.

In like manner Zazel, Farini's first contribution to the welfare of the Aquarium, was shot from a cannon. There was a frenzied outcry—it may have been from a genuinely horrified public, or it may have been from the advertising department of the Aquarium—to the Home Office, and Mr Secretary Cross wrote to the manager warning him that he would be held responsible for any accident to Zazel. Within twenty-four hours London was placarded with Mr Cross's letter, and with Mr Wybrow Robertson's reply, in which he united to his assurance that there was no danger, an invitation to the Home Secretary to come and be shot up at his convenience, and so satisfy himself. Not being Mr Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary ignored the invitation, although in truth there was little danger in Zazel's performance if the apparatus did its work, which was very simple.

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Farini got a large fee, Zazel but a small one. She assumed the time-honoured prerogative of the *prima donna*, and threatened to walk out of the theatre. Farini finessed, and in secrecy prepared four Zazels in separate suburbs, all ready to replace the recalcitrant beauty at a moment's notice.

Farini was something of an ethnologist too. He showed a group of Zulus, a group of Laplanders, another of what he called "earth men" and a hair-covered girl whom he distinguished from the common or garden "bearded lady" of Ratcliffe Highway by describing her as "Darwin's Missing Link," impudently challenging scientific discussion of what is not an unusual phenomenon, and may be acquired for a moderate figure through any of the theatrical papers. Krao was one of the few "freaks" who contrived to secure a share of her earnings. She now lives in New York, well-to-do and well-educated. When Farini retired from business, having made a comfortable fortune, he devoted himself to gardening, and became an authority on the begonia. But the Klondyke gold rush was too much for him and off he went again.

Meanwhile the Aquarium perfunctorily remembered its educational mission. It exhibited a primitive telephone. It managed awhile to keep "the only Gorilla alive in captivity"—Pongo of blessed memory. But it killed two unhappy whales. One does not recall that the "Talking Walrus" recited passages from *Alice in Wonderland*, though, of course, he should have done so. Most of the "Educated Seals" graduated from the Aquarium, which set the fashion, too, in boxing kangaroos.

Manager to manager succeeded—to Mr Wybrow Robertson, Captain Hobson, who instituted the swimming exhibitions so long a feature of the Aquarium programme, and billiard

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tournaments ; to Captain Hobson, Mr De Pinna, who spread himself on pugilists ; to Mr De Pinna, Captain Molesworth, whose term was distinguished by the advent of Sandow, and by the Zœo incident.

Strong men there have been from time immemorial in the world of popular entertainment. But they were held to be vulgar ; they had one foot in the fair and one in the circus ring. The music hall looked at them a little askance, even in its unregenerate days. Sampson, who arrived at the Aquarium some time in 1889, was a smart, gentlemanlike little man, who got a certain vogue in the Bohemian set. To him certainly is due the position of the “ strong man ” to-day as an accepted and highly paid artist—with Sandow’s super growth into a company promoter and quasi-physician I am not concerned. Sampson was a brilliant and accomplished artist, who bade fair to achieve a distinction in his sphere. But he was criminally careless. His dramatic defeat by the unknown Sandow might have been retrieved. But the too fascinating strong man was immediately involved in a scandal which involved his ruin. Nothing is so certain as that Sampson believed his challenge, delivered from the Aquarium stage, would fall on the air, or at any rate be accepted by some inefficient adventurer. His possibly dangerous rivals were known, and their absence was noted. Otherwise the stage would have been differently set, as every showman—not now to discourse of the tricks of this trade—knows. What a dramatic scene was that when young Sandow, in evening dress, sprang lightly from his box, held Sampson to his challenge, walked away with all the honours, and continued his triumphant progress to heights undreamed of.

Soon afterwards the Zœo sensation occurred. There is

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no doubt the unhappy lady, absolutely devoid of offence, was made the occasion of an outcry by persons with ulterior objects. The Aquarium had already got a particular reputation, and year after year, at the meeting of the London County Council to consider licences for places of popular entertainment, the fury of the battle raged around the Aquarium. Its licence had already been decorated with admonitions and reservations—illegally, it may be, but effectively—when the Zœo affair occurred. The idea of the “purity” party seems to have been to forge, in Midsummer, a weapon which it might employ months later. And in this it succeeded.

Zœo, a good-looking young woman of five and twenty, trained in the circus from childhood by Harry Wieland, whom she afterwards married, was a versatile and accomplished artist—a graceful dancer and skilled gymnast, but particularly an aerial performer of great daring. Her Aquarium *bonne bouche* was a backward somersault, and fall, from a great height to a net. For her advertisement a poster was employed, an enlargement of her photograph in the attire accustomed of a gymnast. Such pictures have been exhibited in hundreds before and since. But *The Standard* was induced by the Central Vigilance Society for the Suppression of Vice to open a correspondence, which increased in violence and bitterness. An application was most ingeniously made by the Vigilance Society to Sir John Bridge at Bow Street, but he shook his head and declared that he could not move till the police complained, and the police were silent. Sir John, bored by persistent applications, asked the Aquarium people if they thought the poster worth the fuss. They did. Next the Rev. Hugh Chapman invited the London County Council

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to condemn the poster by resolution. But the chairman peremptorily ruled such business out of order, and Zœo sailed along complacently till the licensing session, when the storm broke out with the stored-up violence of months. An international crisis could not have engaged such eagerness of journalism. To the poster a new consideration was added. Someone suggested that the gymnast suffered from shocking excoriation, the result of her contact with the net, in her fall. There was a solemn deputation of County Councillors to the Aquarium, soon satisfied that this statement was untrue. But the incident raised a chorus of ridicule. Sanctimonious creatures eyeing Zœo's back filled the comic papers, to the deep annoyance of the amiable and exemplary gymnast. The interest of Parliament was stimulated. But the Aquarium was brought into submission. Captain Molesworth, ere he got his licence, was fain to promise that he would use no more of the posters—he got what consolation he could out of the addendum that he could not if he would, having exhausted the stock.

There is one party to the agitation to whom, at any rate in his attitude on the question of popular entertainment, justice has never been done. "M'Dougall" became, nearly, a dictionary word. Ridicule was poured on the good man by every flippant reporter and every comic singing clown. Sir John M'Dougall was, no doubt, imbued by the qualities of his race and of his creed, but he was never the intolerant opponent of decent recreation. He was confronted with an evil. He fought it fairly and squarely, under a cross fire of misunderstanding. The music hall of to-day is vastly better for his discipline. And still, its best friend cannot allow it to have perfection, even in its distant view.

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Captain Molesworth's tenure of office was not long, after the Zoo business. He was succeeded by Mr Josiah Ritchie, who had money in the concern and was of a disposition to watch it. He had made a comfortable fortune out of artificial teeth, being the pioneer of the Complete Set for a Guinea. But he applied himself to the Aquarium with extraordinary zest and aptitude, cultivating the huge moustache and sombrero of the American showman—though he was a small person—practising the most trivial economies and keeping the Aquarium alive for ten years, by sometimes the most desperate expedients, till he brought the Methodist deal to an issue ; a queer, unforgettable figure.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCERNING CHORISTERS

Antiquity of the Show Girl—The First “Professional Beauty”—The Gaiety Stage Door—Erudite Chorus Girls—Training a Dancer—From the Chorus Room to Fame

THERE are in London some three thousand young women who probably describe themselves as actresses, and who, in varying degrees, really depend upon the theatre for a livelihood. They provide the decorative background of the stage; but they are capable of many subdivisions—dancers, singers, extra ladies and show girls are some. Many of these girls have a definite and laudable ambition, industry and courage. Not more than two-thirds of them can command regular work. Their salaries range from eighteen shillings a week—at which rate, I regret to say, it is possible to engage a trained dancer—to five pounds, which in rare cases is given to a “show girl,” a young woman of conspicuous beauty and style, whose appearance—silent, immobile and expressionless—in a revue or a musical comedy commands a steady sale of five or six stalls a night. This is technically known as Mademoiselle’s “following,” or trade capital.

Among the show girl’s occupations extraneous to the theatre is that of sitting to photographers. A pretty and well-known woman will make as much as two hundred pounds a year by this means—a curious contrast to the experience of poor

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little Maud Branscombe, the first stage beauty to appeal to the photographer as a vendible article. Evelyn Rayne, now a charming matron at Brighton, Mrs Langtry and Mrs Cornwallis West were other shop-window celebrities of the time, for whose category the phrase, "professional beauty," was coined. Maud Branscombe's photographs must have been sold by the million, not only as likenesses, but in all kinds of advertising combinations. She was the "Nun nicer" of a tooth paste. She clung to a cross for "The Rock of Ages."

Lydia Thompson satirically sang :

" I've been photographed like this,
I've been photographed like that,
I've been photographed 'mid falling snow—
In a large and furry hat.
I've been photograph-ed standing—
With my hands behind my back,
But I never have been taken
Like a raving maniac."

Maud Branscombe assured me that she never got a penny piece in respect of her photographs. I met her no great while ago—still a delicate, innocent-looking bit of china.

Hollingshead recognised the show girl as a factor of the Gaiety in a frank and characteristic way. With his own hand he wrote, and affixed to the stage door, the notice : " Ladies drawing less than twenty-five shillings a week are politely requested not to arrive at the theatre in broughams." But the show girl was already an institution. Macready is credited with a moral reflection on her furs. And Dickens knew her. " What's the legitimate object of the drama, Pip ? " said the Viscount. " Human Nature ! " " What are legs ? " " Human Nature ! " " Then let us have plenty

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of Human Nature, Pip ; and I'll stand by you, my buck ! ” True to his compact, the Viscount has “ stood by ” ever since. But “ there are degrees ” in Viscounts too. Doubtless the late Lord Alfred Paget was the most deliberately economical patron of the lighter side of the stage it ever knew. He is said to have stocked himself, for souvenirs, with simple jewellery from Birmingham, at wholesale prices. It was not Lord Alfred who presented one of the sultanas with a priceless set of silver sable. She was asked by her companions how she had spent the day. “ Oh ! ” was the reply, “ those furs the Duke gave me were full of grey hairs ; and *I've been picking them out.* ” Lord Alfred Paget having been a privileged visitor to the earlier Gaiety was, with others, scheduled by George Edwardes, for diplomatic repression by the late Charles Dundas Slater, who, from his seat in the box-office, controlled a door leading forth to the stage. It was suddenly locked, and Slater protested to Lord Alfred that he had not got the key. After an absence of a few days the old reprobate returned, and, flinging a brace of freshly shot rabbits on the ledge of the box-office, he cried : “ There, my lad ! *Now* what about that key ? ”

Rabbits or no rabbits, the door of the Gaiety has been opened pretty freely to the peerage, for there have been no fewer than twenty-three formal marriages of minor actresses to men of title in as many years.

Sometimes these marriages have grim sequels. There was a famous beauty of the stage, twenty-five years ago, who married a man of title, and was disposed to live decently and happily with him. His family was utterly irreconcilable, spirited the consumptive, dissipated wretch away, and harassed the unhappy wife till she consented to the arrange-

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ment of a divorce, in the particular respect of which she was indubitably innocent. But her life thereafter may not be told.

When the Gaiety company was first remitted to America and Australia, the utmost difficulty was experienced in persuading the show girls to leave London. Double wages would hardly tempt them to forsake the mysteriously beneficial employments extraneous to the theatre they had in London. In the event, about twenty per cent. of them made brilliant marriages abroad. Some of the girls had very vague ideas about America. The manager lost a party of them on the elevated railway. Working back to the station of origin, he found them huddled together like a flock of frightened sheep. He reproached them with not having the sense to ask their way. "Ask the way indeed," said an angry dame. "Why, there isn't one of us can speak the language."

What she supposed the language to be, deponent sayeth not; but we once encountered a Gaiety girl who spoke French, German and Spanish indiscriminately. Her father was a distinguished clergyman of the Anglican Church; and she eventually married an officer in the Guards. Another guest at this joyous supper-party was a Girton girl. Another was a sumptuous creature whose father dug graves at Kensal Green, and whose pet name, in the disrespectful dressing-room, seeing that she tended to obesity, was "Greasy Grace." It is an incomparably cosmopolitan community, drawn from every class of society, high, low and intermediate, accomplished and illiterate. Many of its members are attracted by nothing but an inordinate love of dress. The musical comedies of to-day are a very debauch of finery, the show girl in stage panoply being worth, say, a

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hundred pounds as she stands. It was characteristic of the George Edwardes method that in order to secure a faultless ensemble, the stage beauty was not merely provided with outer garments, but underwear, corsets and boots—even coiffure.

As a rule the show girl is absolutely devoid of ambition, although in rare instances she has refused to be the slave of her environment. If she believes she has an aptitude for the stage, and expresses a desire to get on, she must prepare for a sacrifice. The revelation of brains instantly subjects her beauty to a heavy discount. She ceases to be a show girl, and is re-rated as a minor actress, at, say, two pounds a week. There is a capital story of a well-known author who, having introduced the character of a chorus lady to a comedy, thought it would save trouble and produce a greater effect if the real article were employed. "I say, guv'nor," said the confident lady, "do you want me to be larky or ladylike in this part?" In an inspired moment the author said: "Oh! be very ladylike, my dear!" The result was indescribably comical.

There is no more respectable type of a working woman than the trained dancer. Her wages range from eighteen to thirty shillings a week, for which she must work hard. Her graduation is a laborious apprenticeship, from childhood—this system, effective in the achievement of technique, though it was unkind, and materially unjust, is making for desuetude. She must devote a part of each day to practice. At night she must report herself sober and competent. Shortly after eleven you may see her at Charing Cross waiting for the Brixton bus. To her, the Savoy is a shadow, and Romano's a romance. She is the sedate, painstaking artisan of the stage, with her sick clubs, and her boot clubs, and all the

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petty prudences of the working class. She sees in the "show girl" the incomprehensible creature of another world, who toils not neither does she spin—yet Solomon in all his glory was not so arrayed. The coming of the revue played havoc with the elderly syrens of the Alhambra and the Empire, many of whom had, indeed, prepared themselves for disaster by contracting matrimonial engagements with the stage carpenters or forming suburban connections as teachers of music and dancing. Even so, the disruption of the Savoy disturbed another interesting and characteristic community. One esteemed lady boasted thirty years' service there. The chorus had always contented her—although, to be just, opportunity was, by this management more than by any other of its day, systematically made for the emancipation of talent. The case of the ballet girl is different. Before the eyes of the recruit are displayed the splendid earnings of Pavlova. As a matter of fact, the average is not one possible *première danseuse*, of any grade, in a thousand pupils. Say ten more may aspire to some lesser distinction. But as a matter of fact the pay of the English dancer is less than the reward of any conscientious and competent exponent of a delightful art should be. It is still more shameful that the great Continental artists whom lately we have delighted to honour have been allowed to bring with them, at home wages, an *entourage*, which it is impossible to believe we could not have supplied here.

When *Chilperic* was done at the Lyceum, with Hervé the handsome composer for its hero, there was a chorus girl behind the throne in the capacity of a page who one night calmly put her foot on the arm of his Majesty's chair and busied herself with a shoelace. Hervé audibly asked her

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what she was doing. "Sure, I'm tying up my shoelace," was the pert response. There was a roar of laughter, the bit of "business" was repeated night after night, and the obtrusive show girl became a famous actress as Jennie Lee. In the same chorus was Kate Phillips, who had flown to the stage from the intolerable cage of a governess. Her opportunity came later, in Herman Merivale's *White Pilgrim* at the Court Theatre. A famous show girl of the seventies was Helen Barry, who had such beautiful hair that a play was "written around" it. That was in later years, when, in *Happy Land*, she had proved to have real ability; and she progressed till she was accepted as an actress of note. In *Babil and Bijou*, at the Lyceum, she led the Amazons; and on the occasion of a royal visit she was so determined that her hair should attract attention, she doubled the natural supply with a huge switch fastened to the back of her helmet, which fell off in the procession. Picking it up in great confusion she replaced the unwieldy thing reversed, with her golden hair not now "hanging down her back" but falling in profusion over her chest!

Robert Courtneidge is one of the few managers taking a real and stimulant interest in his chorus. He maintains that every chorus girl has the contract of a *prima donna* in her reticule. In some aspects a martinet, he is always prospecting for genius, quick to see promise and eager to cultivate it. But then, in the years that have passed since he left a simple Scottish home to become a "super" at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, he has seen—what not, in the way of vicissitude? His first duty was to lay a carpet on the stage he afterwards made famous for the prettiness and fantastic humour of his pantomimes, the combined erudition and

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humanity of his Shakespearean revivals. He has tramped and starved ; he has flung every attribute to the wolves of adversity save a passion for the theatre and a kindness to its people. He is the furious apologist for musical comedy—as a gratefully responsive employment for the best in all the arts, and as a fine training-school for the histrionic aspirant, compelled by its many needs to become versatile and flexible.

And indeed, the stage of to-day justifies him in a score of instances. When James Albery fell in love with pretty Mary Moore, and married her, she was a Gaiety girl. When Marie Etherington found that the concert platform was not fulfilling the ambitions she had cherished as an Academy student it was to commit herself to a long and exigent apprenticeship in opera bouffe. Then *Dorothy* made Marie Tempest famous ; and *Becky Sharpe* made her more famous. Ellis Jeffries was a Savoy chorister. Constance Collier was a Gaiety girl, although with a family tree deep rooted in the stage, and luxuriant. Ethel Irving was another product of musical comedy and another *bonne chienne de chasse*. Her father was a genuine Irving, and very angry to think that a beginner by the name of Brodribb should choose that of Irving. Latest addition to the list is that of Mabel Russell, whose performance as the girl crook in *Within the Law* set the town talking.

When the traveller in Lucian gazed upon a memorial and asked its meaning he was told it had been erected in gratitude, by shipwrecked mariners, who had called on Neptune and been saved. “ But what,” said he, “ of them that called on Neptune and were drowned ? ” The popular favourites of the stage have a strange way of disappearing from the public

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view, sometimes to a happy and prosperous retirement. From this, a first night at the old home invariably entices them, heavy-footed husbands in attendance. These under-dressed veterans, with over-dressed hair, are a most interesting complement of a Gaiety *première*. Some time before his death Augustus Moore, in a reminiscent article, mentioned the name of a clever and beautiful girl, a star of comic opera in the seventies, and asked : “ What has become of her ? ” The answer came from the poor soul herself, her address a London workhouse. Moore at once busied himself to make a better arrangement. It was his nature to. But he was asked to desist. His correspondent was absolutely contented with her lot and conscious of the wisdom of restraint. I do not fill up sordid intervals, but I believe Moore found a modified pleasure in such periodical benefactions as were possible.

I know of one Gaiety girl who is married to a magnate of the American market ; of another who runs a boarding-house at Chelsea ; of another who is contented on a cattle ranch in California, and of another who died a dipsomaniac in a New York penitentiary. *Gaudeamus igitur, juvenes dum sumus !*

CHAPTER XXIX

MUSICAL COMEDY

The First Musical Comedy—*In Town*—How "Owen Hall" arrived
—Collaboration according to Gilbert and Sullivan—The George
Edwardes Method

WHEN Gilbert and Sullivan wanted to differentiate their compositions from comic opera as it prevailed ere *The Sorcerer*, they coined a new phrase, "comedy-opera," and on the initiative of D'Oyly Carte, a musical and dramatic agent in a comparatively small way of business, for the first time, I believe, in the history of the stage, that wondrous thing, a syndicate, was formed—The Comedy Opera Company (Limited). The earlier Alhambra Company was different in constitution and intent. Within our own time another new phrase has become familiar—in its wake, syndicates innumerable. What was the first "musical comedy"? I saw *Morocco Bound* cited the other day. Then *My Sweetheart*. Earlier still was a piece of this type which came to the Duke's Theatre, Holborn, in the seventies, *Conrad and Lisette*. I should say that Swift inspired the first musical comedy when he said: "What an odd, pretty thing a Newgate pastoral would make," and Gay responded with *The Beggar's Opera*.

But for us, musical comedy certainly began with *In Town*. As to whose idea it was, authorities differ. It was eventually constructed by James T. Tanner, a silent, gipsy-looking man,

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with a passion for sea-fishing, who had been Van Biene's handy man, and who had established his skill as an author, or as a carpenter for authors, with an amazing melodrama called *The Broken Melody*. Tanner made no pretence to literary skill, but he had the genius of *mise en scène* and of patient rehearsal, and for five and twenty years was indispensable to George Edwardes, who knew Tanner's worth and who had the most cynical assessment of the merely literary trimmers of his wares. Once at a rehearsal Edwardes wanted a few lines to emphasise a situation. He appealed languidly to half-a-dozen satellites ; then his eye lit on the author, a consciously important journalist. "Hullo, Mr So-and-so," he cried, "I wonder if you can help us !"

"Wropt in mystery" is the exact process of concocting a musical comedy. From time to time the conspirators quarrel, and when such gentlemen fall out—— There have been sordid revelations in the Law Courts ; in theatrical circles, recriminatory stories of stolen suggestions, of rejected manuscripts from which the essential idea has been withdrawn, are common. Three of the men whose names are cut deep into the history of musical comedy did not speak for years !

In Town gripped the popular imagination at once. It brought into Bohemia a Cambridge professor with an incomparable trick of verse, Adrian Ross ; and there he has remained. It gave Mr Arthur Roberts the most effective environment he has ever had ; and, incidentally, it launched a new style of silk hat on London, the Coddington, variations on which have ever since been popular with the "nuts."

George Edwardes saw the eagerness with which the public responded to *In Town*, and promptly marshalled his forces.

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One of his first recruits was "Owen Hall," who was actually James Davis, a solicitor, with a passion for intrusive journalism, and for gambling of all kinds—cards, horses, wild-cat mining shares, all "looked alike" to him. He graduated as dramatic critic of *The Sporting Times* over the signature, "Stalled Ox." He founded *The Bat*, and quickly went to gaol for an article on a race-horse trainer, whom he declared to be as "hot as the hinges of hell." When another writ was issued against him he retired to the south of France till things were smoothed out. And *The Bat* was transformed into *The Hawk*—which did nearly as much for Augustus Moore. Davis cherished a bitter hatred of Justice Hawkins to the end of his days, and never lost a chance of a gibe at that wonderful old man, who did not condemn all guerrilla journalists, after all. The pen-name "Owen Hall" was suggested to Davis by one of his three clever sisters as summing up his financial position, and he punctiliously demanded its use, apropos his stage work. Refer to him as Davis, or try a little pungency of criticism, and instantly a furious letter arrived. For, like every slashing journalist I have known, he was sensitive to agony himself.

He cherished the belief that musical comedy began with his *Gaiety Girl*, and that his books, which included *An Artist's Model*, *The Geisha* and *Florodora*, were gold mines. From this point of view, shortly before his death, when troubles beset him, he sought to float himself as a limited liability company, for the production of musical comedy books, arraying magnificent figures of potential profits. It was a "personal security" with a vengeance. In truth, Davis's strong point was an insolent witticism, which tickled the jaded palate, and gave the censor many a bad quarter of an



H. G. HIBBERT

Caricature by A. S. Forrest

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hour. That precious phrase, "the virtuous end of Regent Street," was his.

Meanwhile a new star arose in the musical comedy firmament, and has never ceased to shine. Captain Basil Hood, a young soldier who had tentatively written a one-act play for Augustus Harris, and sketched a ballet for the Empire, found that the completion of *Gentleman Joe* engrossed him to the jeopardy of his future in the army, so he sent in his papers, though it meant the sacrifice of a pension. He has never regretted the step. Captain Hood is unique in that he prepares a plot, writes dialogue and lyrics—all with a workmanlike and sympathetic consciousness of the music to come—and supervises the production, as Gilbert did. He cites his friend and collaborator, Sir Arthur Sullivan, who said: "The man who asks, 'Did you take your music to Gilbert, or did Gilbert bring his book to you?' is a damned fool; though we did do a little revision together, naturally."

George Edwardes had this important distinction among managers, who are apt to be persons of one idea; or to have a supine belief that they can go on repeating one success. He saw that musical comedy must differ from itself in time, just as it had needed to differ from the effete Gaiety burlesque. And so there was a constant process of development and careful variation in the pieces done to his commission. He seemed to have become dangerously set at last in his devotion to the Viennese school. A profit of, say, two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, on *The Merry Widow*, on the most liberally experimental disposition, would have such a tendency. But there came a sudden change. One of the things we shall never know is the loss to English speculators of capital invested in undelivered or now

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unpracticable Viennese and German music at the time of the war outbreak. For the traffic had swelled to millions.

Mr George Dance, past master in provincial pantomime, made his own corner in musical comedy. He saw that the old nursery tales had still the most vitality ; and his standard of humour was H. J. Byron's, who, when it was pointed out to him that he was employing a joke a second time, said : " Used it to get a laugh ? " " Oh yes," was the reply. " Then in it goes again," said the experienced dramatist. What was *The Lady Slavey* but our old friend *Cinderella* ? And what should *The Lady Slavey* do but set up Mr William Greet and Mr Englebach in business and furnish incongruous capital for the production of *The Sign of the Cross*. And again, *The Gay Parisienne* made a manager of Mr Edward Laurillard—in time to come, the impresario of *Potash and Perlmutter*, of *On Trial*, and of the New Gaiety. And again *The Chinese Honeymoon* established a third important impresario, Mr Frank Curzon.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SALARIES OF CELEBRITIES

Harry Lauder's Figure—Stage Stars in Variety—What *Première Danseuses* earn—Red-nosed Comedians' Reward

WHEN Alfred Bunn, then manager of Drury Lane Theatre, demurred to old Farren's demands in the matter of salary, the actor retorted: "When there is only one cock salmon in the market, you must pay the price. I am the cock salmon." This seemed to settle the question of artists' salaries, for all time. And yet the parrot cry of chairmen, apologising to shareholders in music hall companies for diminishing dividends, or for none, is still the "extortions" of the performer. The real trouble is that so few music hall "magnates" of to-day know a cock salmon when they see one. Easily deceived in this respect, they enter into reckless competition, with others of their kind, for spurious ware, and so they are committed to immense, unprofitable outlay. There are, no doubt, many worn-out, and even originally worthless, artists drawing large salaries and contracted to do so for years to come. But the ignorance and folly of their employers cannot fairly be construed into their "extortion."

Then there is the American market. Its demand for English performers of certain kinds is always growing, and the conditions of the business of popular entertainment over there are such that its entrepreneurs can afford to pay salaries

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far beyond the possibilities of the English market, and still make handsome profits. Harry Lauder supplies a case in point. His demand is now for a minimum five hundred pounds a week. He was offered eight hundred pounds a week for a special engagement at the Empire, and declined it. Few English variety theatres could pay such a salary—none, indeed, to maintain a well-balanced programme. But America eagerly offers Mr Lauder that much, and more. None can blame him for taking his good where he finds it.

Leaving aside these artificial prices, and considering the market at large, the expert observer is confronted by an acutely interesting situation. Never in its history was the variety stage in a state of so much uncertainty. The dividing line, once so clear and rigid, between theatre and music hall, has gone. The programmes at some of our vast variety theatres are made up as to one-half, or even two-thirds, of dramatic performances. In the second and third rate halls one finds so-styled “revues.” At first sight he is constrained to wonder what has become of the old-style music hall professional. A recent programme at the London Coliseum included no more than two names that would at one time have been at all suggestive of the music hall. The salary list, at this juncture, exceeded two thousand pounds weekly! But the London Coliseum, with its seating capacity of three thousand and upwards, and its two performances daily, is able to withstand such a draft on its exchequer. Other houses cannot. The Empire was lately employing four artists whose combined salaries nearly totalled a thousand pounds per week; but the rest certainly did not absorb a second thousand.

Occasionally a huge salary is paid merely to procure an

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advertisement. This, however, is an outlay that soon spends its force. A few years ago there was a dead set on the part of the music hall managers at the distinguished favourites of the "regular" stage, some of whom had affected an attitude of extreme superiority. Money told its tale. With three exceptions, every important actor and actress of the day has now lined up with the Robeys, the Chirgwins and the Consuls. Some sensational engagements of theatrical celebrities have, to be sure, been tragical failures in every aspect save that of advertisement for the procurer, and are not likely to be repeated.

Probably the largest fee paid was to Sarah Bernhardt for her first appearance at the London Coliseum—namely, a thousand pounds, for her personal services, apart from the salaries of her company and the other expenses. Sir George Alexander and Sir Herbert Tree had seven hundred and fifty pounds at the Palace. Miss Marie Tempest had five hundred pounds at the London Hippodrome. Mr Seymour Hicks, Mr Charles Hawtrey and Mr Arthur Bouchier command from two hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty pounds, in circumstances.

Some dancers now receive very large salaries. At the Alhambra in the old days twenty-five pounds a week was considered a large fee. Genée came to the Empire for fifteen pounds a week, and for a long time was contented with thirty; toward the end of her time there she had seventy. Then came the boom. Not to be precise, the four most prominent dancers of the day range from two hundred and fifty to seven hundred and fifty pounds a week. Pavlova has, in America, soared away from the topmost figure.

Although the form of the music hall programme has

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changed, its former constituents have not been destroyed. Many of them have been affiliated to the revue, and the tendency has been to "better themselves" in the process, while a very large number of undistinguished but useful artists have found lucrative employment as "fill-ups" of moving picture programmes. One result of the war has been to deplete the music hall stage of acrobats. The few important troupes available at this juncture are American. The odd thing is that the earliest acrobat and gymnast—indigenous to the fair, transplanted to the circus, then to the music hall, was English, though he believed it necessary to affect outrageous foreign names. Then France got a vogue with Leotard and Blondin. Then came Germany. All these nations—Italy too—made a call, and a successful call, on their sons at the outbreak of war. Once an acrobatic troupe of real distinction would command as much as a hundred pounds a week, but this sum had possibly to be divided among a numerous party. But what in the profession are known as "dumb shows" have lost much of their attractiveness, while the mere risk of life is a drug in the market. You can get an effective parachute descent for as little as thirty shillings, a perilous high dive for five pounds a week, and a tight-rope walk at a great elevation for the same sum.

As for "music hall" salaries, as the layman will understand the term, there has certainly been a great increase during the past ten years; but there has not been a sudden leap from figures of extreme modesty to figures of great magnitude, as some would effectively contrast it. From the outset the popular favourite has been generously rewarded. Morton paid Sam Cowell sixty and even eighty pounds a week at the Canterbury in the fifties. John Hollingshead paid

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Leotard one hundred and eighty pounds a week at the Alhambra in the sixties. Blondin got a hundred pounds an ascent, but accepted a reduction on the rare occasions when he appeared nightly in a music hall. It used to be a favourite amusement of the Guardsmen whom Ouida loved to idealise to travel pickaback with Blondin across his rope. But the authorities at length forbade this. Archibald Nagel, one of the Alhambra directors, made a bet that he would cross and return with Blondin. He had a fit of nerves half-way, and Blondin grimly remarked that one of them seemed likely to fall. Nagel steadied himself, and was safely landed on the platform, but he swore that had his wager been a thousand pounds instead of five he would not make the return journey. Leonati, the spiral ascensionist, had two hundred pounds for six ascents at North Woolwich Gardens five and thirty years ago. Lulu received a hundred pounds a week. Zazel's flight from the cannon at the Westminster Aquarium yielded one hundred and twenty pounds, but not to Zazel, who probably got a five-pound note.

These are, no doubt, exceptional instances. Chance put in my way the pay sheet for several years, in the early sixties, of a Manchester music hall—the best of its day. The total outlay averaged less than fifty pounds a week. To the fact that George Leybourne, Fred Coyne and Nelly Power earned no more than four pounds a week one must not attach great importance, for these artists were at an early stage in their careers. But a combination of Charles Bernard and the Sisters Brougham, operatic artists highly esteemed at the Canterbury, the Vokes Family (not long previously the Vokes Children), and the John Lauri Troupe of ballet dancers and pantomimists at twelve pounds a week, ten pounds a week

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and sixteen pounds a week respectively, supply figures that might be multiplied at least by five to-day. Miss Georgina Smithson is another four-pound-a-week artist in my Manchester list. At her best, some years later, she commanded forty pounds a week for appearances at two London halls nightly. So did Louie Sherrington and Annie Adams, competing "serio-comic" singers of that time. I suppose we might treble all to-day. The only considerable salary at Manchester was that of "Young Blondin" at twenty pounds a week for two weeks.

Oddly enough the "Great" Macdermott was not highly paid in the hour of his supreme triumph. When he sang *We Don't Want to Fight*, at the London Pavilion, his salary was ten pounds a week, spontaneously increased to twenty pounds a week—which was his price per "turn" for many years to come. In the provinces his salary was sixty pounds a week. He got a hundred and sixty pounds for a Manchester pantomime. The two Maes, popular favourites of this time, would usually share fifty pounds a week. There were several Maes, some of whom are dead. One was lately discovered in a shoeblack, near Tottenham Court Road.

I have the figures supplied to me, with many others here cited, by the late Hugh Jay Didcott, of an important West End music hall twenty-five years ago. The programme contains the names of thirty artists. There is nothing in the nature of a sketch or set piece—all individual performers, including Bessie Bellwood at twenty-five pounds, Jenny Hill at thirty pounds, Harry Randall at twenty-five pounds, Macdermott at thirty pounds, and so on. Most of these artists were appearing at three, four and even five music halls in central and suburban London each night. This practice,

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which caused much trouble and discussion as to its conditions and as to the proper terms at the time of the music hall strike, and subsequent proceedings before the Board of Trade arbitrator, has nearly fallen into disuse during the past few years. When Mr Albert Chevalier had just established himself as a music hall singer in the early nineties, he contentedly worked three "turns" nightly for thirty-six pounds. Shortly he went on a recital tour, and made as much as four hundred and fifty pounds a week. This, incidentally, refutes a statement often made by music hall magnates that music hall artists are not worth the salaries they demand. And, of course, the music hall artist may have an entirely erroneous opinion as to the worth of the music hall magnate!

It is significant that no factor of the music hall programme has maintained his price so steadily as the "red-nosed comedian." Little Tich commands two hundred and fifty pounds a week, but then, he is desperately fastidious as to when and where and how he will work. Mr George Robey is at least a two-hundred-pounds-a-week man. He has had twice that fee, in special circumstances. Mr Eugene Stratton and Mr R. G. Knowles have received two hundred pounds on occasion. There are many performers little known to West End audiences who have an extraordinary vogue in the suburbs and the provinces—two sisters, still in their teens, doing a *mélange* of mimicry and song, and other girls working on similar lines, a diminutive comedian and his wife doing pert dialogues, all exceed a hundred pounds a week.

Miss Margaret Cooper's memory must often revert to the days when a guinea or two for a drawing-room entertainment

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was a welcome addition to her earnings as a music teacher, for she has advanced to two hundred and fifty pounds a week in the meanwhile. Cecilia Loftus's mimicry has commanded two hundred and fifty pounds a week. Yvette Guilbert's sensational debut at the Empire was made in fulfilment of a contract assuring her of three hundred pounds a week. Social engagements and extra performances no doubt increased this greatly. Long ago, we accepted Yvette *en famille*. So she has to be contented with a modest two hundred pounds a week. Miss Vesta Tilley's price has reached three hundred and fifty pounds a week. Miss Ada Reeve runs in the neighbourhood of two hundred and fifty pounds a week and Miss Marie Lloyd ranges from one hundred and fifty pounds a week upwards, according to circumstances.

All these prices are to be accepted subject to the fluctuations of the market—certainly not as a contract to supply the article. And let no young woman comfortably earning thirty shillings a week at a type machine see temptation in the figures I have marshalled.

CHAPTER XXXI

MEMORABLE PRODUCTIONS

Gamblers in Management—Expenses and Earnings of West End Theatres—The Romance of *Charley's Aunt*—The Brave Days of Opera Bouffe—Irving's Extravagance—*The Merry Widow*

ONE of the lessons learned by the theatrical manager from the war is that his expenditure on the production of plays, but especially of musical comedy, had become outrageous, unremunerative and ineffectual. When the curtain rose on one of last year's productions it represented a capital outlay of rather more than ten thousand pounds—there is, of course, a point in accountancy at which capital expenditure ceases, and weekly income and outgoing is reckoned with. In this case, part of the ten thousand pounds was represented by the somewhat idle theatre, and part by the preliminary advertising on that prodigal scale which has become a convention of the theatre. But some seven thousand pounds represented the cost of the scenery and the dresses. The piece achieved merely a *succès d'estime*. Had it been a veritable triumph it could hardly have paid ; for, with large salaries to meet, a considerable rent, and the advertising campaign continued, the weekly margin of possible profit was so small that many months must have elapsed ere the initial outlay was overtaken. And nothing declines in value so precipitously as stage fabric declines. Some of the revivals, and more modest

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productions, of war time have proved that the public is contented with less extravagant shows—finds more time to consider therein the legitimate attractions of the drama, not being distracted by futile splendour. From other points of view, which do not now concern me, the play capable of a moderate success, but discarded, because it does not involve an immoderate outlay, and therefore an immoderate gain—or loss—is potentially most important in the development of a national drama.

Competition is not solely responsible for prodigal expenditure. The spirit of gambling in the commerce of the stage is, in all its phases, mischievous. But the phases differ. A gambler may be expert and judicious in his risks; or he may be extra daring in the consciousness that he is playing with other people's money; or he may be just a reckless fool. All these types are to be found among theatrical managers. And there is another element, which it is not convenient to discuss, but which sometimes deep-dyes, and nearly always tinges, theatrical enterprise.

If a graduate in commercial business, with a single-hearted love of the drama (not of its exponents) and a sense of its recreative, as well as of its artistic and moral, responsibilities, should ever address himself, his own capital, and industry, and routine, to the conduct of a London theatre, controlling, not controlled by his "experts," the result would be interesting, and almost certainly a financial success of great magnitude. There is hardly a theatre in respect of which it would not be possible for such a man to effect an immense saving—on almost every commodity used, and probably on much of the artistic detail. In intimate theatrical circles the names of actors and managers are

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glibly mentioned, whose careers have cost their fatuous financial supporters hundreds of thousands of pounds. There is not an industry in the world of which the conditions are so fatally artificial. There is not a theatrical purveyor, from the great costumier to the bill sticker, who would not willingly deal at half his now accustomed rates if he could work on normal conditions, for certain and prompt payment. Even where he is consciously dealing with an honest and dependable customer, his perfectly intelligible disposition is to impose a contribution to his sinking fund against the others. One's observation is, certainly, that the actor manager, from Garrick onwards, has had the most beneficent influence on the stage. But of actor managers, the tradesman masquerading as an actor has been more effective than the actor masquerading as a tradesman. The tradesman *qua* tradesman has never been fairly tested.

Dependable figures of theatrical commerce are very hard to get. There are the balance sheets of limited liability companies, but their statements are studiously general. There are occasional bankruptcies, the revelations of which are instructive. And that ideally invaluable, but, in practice, often preposterous person, the press agent, circulates some wonderful figures. We were told lately that four revues "represented an outlay of two hundred thousand pounds." Pantomimes have been put down as costing twenty thousand pounds.

Now it is hard to know how a person of any experience, and a sense of economy, can spend more than five thousand pounds on the preparation of a musical comedy or revue, or more than ten thousand pounds on a pantomime. The provincial manager is apt to be the more discreet. Some very

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fine pantomimes have been done in the provinces for a thousand pounds, and some very smart revues have been sent on tour for considerably less. Of course, they have reproduced London designs, and so saved one expense, and many experiments.

How is the money to come back ? Drury Lane is capable of holding upwards of five hundred pounds a performance, and so of taking a thousand pounds a day during the first few weeks of pantomime. But this is a unique instance. The London theatres capable of taking three hundred pounds a performance are very few. I doubt if the average earning capacity of all the West End theatres exceeds two hundred pounds a performance. The very much larger earnings of the American theatres are due to an entirely different disposition of the seats. There they give up nothing like the space we do here to seats at prices equivalent to two shillings and one shilling. Frohman, true to his policy, never sought to impose this plan on London ; but Frohman enormously increased the difficulties of English managers by his reckless inflation of actors' salaries and his princely treatment of authors. Here is an instance : a young actor at the St James's Theatre, whose not inadequate salary there was eight pounds a week, attracted him. Frohman at once tendered a contract for a term of years at forty pounds a week for London, sixty pounds a week for America !

Rent is one of the most serious problems of the London manager. Years ago a hundred pounds a week was a common figure. One of the first of the modern houses, the Lyric, was leased to Horace Sedger for a term, at six thousand five hundred pounds a year. This, probably, began the upward trend. Meanwhile a figure as high as ten thousand pounds

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a year has been reached—quite ridiculous, and an intolerable burden on a legitimate enterprise. The explanation is in many cases an accumulation of sub-leases, each one carrying a profit rental. There are cases in which an ephemeral tenant has been called upon to pay five times the rental which satisfied the original tenant. Some half-a-dozen original leases are on the eve of completion, and so it may be that an important revision of theatre rentals as between “principals only” is at hand. Its effect will be salutary. One fairly desirable West End house was lately on offer for twenty-one years at a rental of a hundred and fifty pounds a week.

Sometimes the rental includes the refreshment bars ; but not always. This is a most important detail. Augustus Harris frankly recorded that the thousand pounds cash which he secured for twelve months’ sub-lease of the Drury Lane bars formed his original capital. The bars of a London theatre, at a fairly prosperous time, are worth from thirty to forty pounds a week.

Charley’s Aunt supplies one of the romances of the stage. For its production, at the Royalty Theatre, a thousand pounds was guaranteed by a capitalist who was actually called upon to find no more than six hundred pounds. This, it transpired, he borrowed, piecemeal, from a money-lender at sixty per cent ! The run of the play at the Globe is historic. The rent of the theatre was seventy pounds a week. Excluding Penley, the largest salary paid was twelve pounds a week. There were as many as twenty companies duplicating performances all over the world, and half a million of money is not a wild estimate of the eventual earnings of the farce. The three persons among whom the profits were originally

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shared all died poor, but when, a year or two ago, the "rights" reverted to the family of the late Brandon Thomas, they were reckoned to be worth a steady two thousand pounds a year still.

Another instance of a play produced at a moderate cost and achieving immense results is *Sweet Lavender*. Terry is understood to have made fifty thousand pounds out of this play. He might have made more, but he hesitated so long as to the acquisition of the provincial rights that he lost them. Terry was a man of large charities and small reservations. During the run of *The Times*, there was a bitter feud between Fanny Brough and another actress, whom Miss Brough charged with habitually spilling the milk, during their afternoon tea scene, and so endangering a gown, bought, of course, at her own expense. Miss Brough at length took her grievance to Terry. "God bless my soul," he cried, "you don't mean to tell me that Brickwell is giving you real milk!" The suggested economy is almost equal to that of one of our most engaging actress-managers—with a very clear eye on business. A canary was employed in a production. The property man's weekly bill included twopence for bird seed. It was returned with a note: "Query: Bulk cost of bird seed? Usual allowance for normal bird? Also: get quotations for artificial birds, rigid and with mechanical movements."

There seemed to be some magic influence in the transfer of a play to the Globe, as witness again *Les Cloches de Corneville*, originally produced at the Folly, and *The Private Secretary*, originally produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. *Les Cloches de Corneville* was a rank failure at the El Dorado in Paris—though Canton, its owner, managed to encourage it

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into a success elsewhere. Alexander Henderson and H. B. Farnie committed themselves to its production here, but believed it to be foredoomed to failure. They forbade Alias the costumier any serious outlay, and furiously upbraided him when they found that the bills had run up to nearly four hundred pounds. They cast Shiel Barry as Gaspard quite casually—he was an Irish character actor who, on his part, had no faith in his possibilities, and took the precaution of losing his voice on the eve of the production. He filled himself with every nostrum chemists could supply, but, fortunately, did not overcome his hoarseness. Henderson and Farnie devoted themselves to one of their periodical quarrels, and were not in the theatre when the curtain fell. They were hurriedly summoned, and when, as they approached, they heard thunders of applause, thought the audience was “guying” the piece, and exchanged a satisfied “I told you so.” For twenty years *Les Cloches de Corneville* was played somewhere *sans cesse*; but, for some reason, Planquette never drew fees on the English performance. Long before his death he estimated his loss under this head at forty thousand pounds.

When *Les Cloches de Corneville* was transferred to the Globe it was re-dressed, but even then, at one-fifth the cost a modern manager would consider to be essential. My old friend Alias tells me that an expenditure of from a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds was considered ample in the brave days of opera bouffe, and he, of course, is the epitome of its history, from *La Fille de Madame Angot* onward. It is one of the dear incongruities of London that the fripperies of the modern stage should be fashioned in what was once a convent, while the family life

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of the Aliases, in its old-Parisian circumstance, should touch nearly the last refuge of Jeanne du Barry.

Charles Alias, the son of a French surgeon, refused to become what he called a butcher. His angry parent bade him go to London and "sell socks," a phrase of contempt for tradesmen. Seeing the name of Clodoche on the bills of the Philharmonic Theatre, Islington, the lonely Alias addressed himself to a compatriot, formed a friendship that long endured, and embarked upon the career he has so adorned.

Clodoche originated the dance we know as the cancan. It has been described as a development of the Carmagnole, but this description is not quite correct. Clodoche's fantastic leaps were as nearly original as a modern dance may be. He was a finely skilled carver of wood, for decorative purposes, mostly of the human figure. He frequented the Opera balls with a party of friends, and their dances created so great a sensation that the proceedings would be stopped for their special performance, wealthy patrons of the function flinging them handsome gifts. Eventually, Clodoche became a professional dancer. The indecency of the dance, which Mademoiselle Finette first performed in London, began when women, or men dressed as women, addressed themselves to an increase of its antics.

Another associate of Alias was Phil May, introduced to him as a needy, erratic, but very promising artist, by Lionel Brough. May was added to the staff, and, as a precaution, kept in the house. His characteristics soon developed, and one day Alias, urgently desiring a sketch, surreptitiously removed Phil's clothes from his room, sent him up his breakfast and some drawing paper, locked the door and betook himself to the Avenue Theatre. During an interval of the

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rehearsals there was an adjournment to Romano's, where May was found, in a Henry VIII. gaberline, velvet slippers and so forth, calmly sipping his third *apéritif*. "Good God," cried Alias, "and have you made me ridiculous by walking here like that?" Said the delinquent: "Walking, governor? Oh no! The cabman's waiting outside. Better pay him."

Heavy expenditure on productions is not altogether a modern custom. Charles Kean claimed, in one of his statements to the public, to have expended fifty thousand pounds in a single season! Dion Boucicault squandered eleven thousand pounds of Lord Londesborough's money on *Babil and Bijou*, and bolted to America on the eve of the production. Boiled lobsters, swimming complacently in the deep sea, were a memorable feature thereof. Nothing so costly and disastrous occurred in London till the *Cinderella* pantomime, which Charles Harris did at His Majesty's, in 1889-1890. He had quarrelled with his brother Augustus, and meant to ruin Drury Lane at any cost. The result was, instead, bankruptcy in five minutes, and a world scandal—meetings of starving supers, a public subscription and the devil (but nobody else) to pay.

Boucicault was probably the first author to receive really enormous fees—but he "produced" his plays, acted in them, took a tithe of the receipts under all headings, and money ran through his fingers in tens of thousands. He received three thousand pounds for altering, and adding his name to, the American version of *Rip Van Winkle*, for reproduction by Joseph Jefferson at the Adelphi Theatre. He is said to have made as much as forty thousand pounds in a year.

Fortunes have been made out of melodrama more often, I imagine, by their entrepreneurs than by their authors, for

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various reasons. When Paul Meritt wrote *New Babylon* he made a truculent demand for "two hundred pounds or nothing." Charles Wilmot thought to compromise by offering a share, and the sum divisible at a not advanced stage in the history of the play was sixty thousand pounds. This was not Wilmot's only unfortunate experience of the chance element in theatrical adventure. He disliked the idea of insurance. He had the Duke's Theatre burned down once, the Philharmonic—or the Grand—Theatre burned down twice. Then, he insured heavily, and spent the rest of his life in paying unrequited premiums.

There are few things so tragical as the murder of a good story. Paul Meritt did not say, when Carlyle died: "Another of us gone," but he did say, when Victor Hugo died: "Another gap in our ranks." Meritt was a man of immense bulk, and had the peevish consciousness of it, not uncommon. I once surprised him copying his letters—he was a punctilious and legible correspondent—by the obvious process of sitting on the letter book. He was—could one say—covered with confusion, and begged that the incident might be forgotten. He habitually protested that he ate nothing; but Pettitt used to tell a story of Meritt and baked sheep's heads delightedly discovered at an East End eating-house which made a fool of Gargamelle and the tripe.

Sir John Hare once described Irving as "the most extravagant manager that ever put his careless signature to a cheque." So, no doubt, he was. His sole thought in regard to the material of the Lyceum productions was to get the best, in fulfilment of the specifications of the greatest authorities available, who had no knowledge of the limitations of the theatre. Bram Stoker has put it on record that

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the capital expenditure on the Lyceum stage during his term of management was two hundred thousand pounds. These are heroic figures, and authentic, of course. One would be interested in particulars. I believe that the Lyceum *Faust* cost more than ten thousand pounds. There was more reason for an almost exactly similar expenditure on the Empire ballet. At His Majesty's, an adequate stage setting is wont to be secured for an expenditure of about three thousand pounds. This would include the *Faust* production. But His Majesty's employs an acute business brain as well as a genius.

We reach sensible, business figures of the Lyceum when we learn from Mr Stoker that after a fire had destroyed thirty thousand pounds' worth of stores, it was found possible to duplicate five essential productions for eleven thousand pounds. To anyone with a knowledge of Irving's method this is a plain tale. He would have a costly dress made for his consideration, and reject it. He would have a second, and a third submitted—and finally make up his mind to the first, lightly committing the others to stock.

I recall few things more interesting than a week of wandering, with Irving's sanction, among the accumulated scenic stores of the Lyceum. And the memory was never so poignant as when I made a second tour of the famous old theatre, from "grid" to cellar, with Tom Barrasford when he was accorded proud possession of the Lyceum, for transformation into a music hall, after the sale by auction of all its paraphernalia, in many instances of deeply historic interest, at prices so ridiculous as even to o'ercrow the humour of the newspaper reporters. Let me pause to pay a tribute to Tom Barrasford's memory. His origin was so humble that,

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if he knew it, he never disclosed it. He had spent his youth among the flotsam and jetsam of the Tyneside, on the outskirts of race-courses, in "sing-songs." His adaptativeness was immense. He had the bookmaker's deftness at figures. He could speak a little French, a little German, talk thieves' slang with his fingers, sing, dance, judge men and horses to a nicety—he mastered most things, always excepting the rudiments of English grammar. But he was the very apostle of popular recreation. It was a matter of sincere delight to him to feel that in his many music halls he was affording innocent pleasure to a hundred thousand people at once. He would unexpectedly march, in this mood a very martinet, through any of his houses, and a speck of dirt on the brass of the door-plate, or in the humour of a hundred-guinea comedian, raised a storm of rage.

Arnott, dead now, as every important member of Irving's expert, affectionate and passionately loyal *entourage* is dead, was the autocrat of the Lyceum "property room," which began in the old drawing-room of Madame Vestris, but spread to the remotest corner of the theatre. The accumulation was immense and fascinating. Many of the ingenious resorts of that time have been rendered unnecessary by modern invention and discovery. But a consciousness of the achievements of modern science only increases one's admiration for the tireless painstaking of the Lyceum.

More interesting to us to-day are such items as forty suits of chain mail, procured at an immense cost, for *Lear*. It was found that the most stalwart "super" could not move in one, so silvered fishing net was substituted. The public was none the wiser and none the worse, but Irving was needlessly anxious that the counterfeit should not be revealed. For

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Wolsey's robes a commission was dispatched to Rome, to get the very shade of silk. For *Faust* an organ was installed, and a peal of bells, both at a great cost. A spinning-wheel of the period was procured from Nuremberg for Ellen Terry, who could not work it, so Arnott had to make a simple wheel, at a cost of a few shillings. In *The Lyons Mail* a valise is hastily slit, and banknotes torn out by impetuous fingers. Bank of France notes, again, carefully of the period, were printed on the proper paper, so that if one or two should be carried by the stage draughts into the stalls the illusion was unbroken. Bank of England notes were needed for *The Iron Chest*, but in this case the authorities forbade an exact reproduction. In *The Lyons Mail*, again, the aid of a well-known conjurer was invoked for the glasses out of which Dubosc appeared to drink such vast quantities of brandy.

On the eve of a great production, when everybody had been rehearsed to utter weariness, Irving would dismiss, and, alone untired, would say quietly : " Now, Arnott ! You and I will have our run through." Then he would seat himself in the centre of the stage, and minutely inspect all the details, to a gaiter button. " There was hell," said Arnott with a grin, " because a bit of solder had been used in some of them Cromwell suits of armour, where Mr Seymour Lucas had specified rivets." I doubt if Arnott really said of an important production, summarising the titled authorities associated in it : " Three blooming knights—and, that's what I give it." Terriss was the only man who ever dared retort. Once he had glibly run off a few lines of Shakespeare—repeatedly and persistently in his own way. " Terriss, Terriss ! My boy ! What do those lines mean to you ?" said " the Chief." Terriss stared blankly. " What do they

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mean ? What—do—they—mean ? Oh ! governor ! I say ! Come off it ! ”

George Edwardes probably knew as much of the ups and downs of theatrical management as any man—more than will ever be revealed. He discarded *Dorothy* as a failure, and sold it, stock, lock and barrel, to “ Jack ” Leslie for a thousand pounds. Leslie made sixty thousand pounds out of this strange conglomeration of a “ book ” written for one opera—not original in idea at that—music composed for another, and an interpolated ballad, *Queen of My Heart*, not intended for either but for a Christy Minstrel show ! Leslie ruined himself—over *Dorothy*—lived for years in exile, and came home to die in poverty. In a few years *The Chinese Honeymoon* made a new record for a musical play. It must have run to a hundred thousand pounds. And then *The Merry Widow* put them all in the shade—even as regards England alone. What her earnings were in America, and on the Continent, none could compute. What I do know is, that her near rival, *The Waltz Dream*, yielded Leo Fall, not long before a musical director at the German equivalent of five pounds a month, composer’s fees to the amount of sixty thousand pounds. But, whatever *The Merry Widow* made, the figures have certainly been equalled in amount by the losses of those reckless and stupid managers who saw no objective but to secure “ another *Merry Widow*.” As a receptacle for the fortunes of the foolish, at any rate, the theatre is certainly a bottomless pit.

CHAPTER XXXII

A STUDY IN STOLL

Manager at Thirteen—Leybourne's Last Days—The Fantastic Frock Coat—Lessons in French—Literary Efforts

IN 1880, a youngster still somewhat short of fourteen years was hastily summoned from school to make what show he could in the room of his step-father, deceased. That is thirty-five years ago ; and, in the meanwhile, Oswald Stoll has not taken a definite holiday. He has personally initiated twenty music halls. He is the effective manager of thirty-five ; and he is interested in upwards of sixty. The birthplace of this vast enterprise is now a tailor's shop, in Liverpool. In 1845 it was the Royal Parthenon Assembly Rooms—the casual home of the Iowa Indians, and Bianchi's Waxworks. A year later, one J. G. Stoll began business in the Parthenon Saloon, thereafter the Parthenon Rooms, eventually the Parthenon Music Hall, which remained in the Stoll family for half-a-century. There is extant a programme of *poses plastiques* exhibited in 1850. Mr John Reed, "the Old Favourite Comic Vocalist," and Miss M. Baxter, "the Celebrated Sentimental Singer from the London and Glasgow Concerts" alternated with pictures of a curiously familiar type : "The Sultan's Favourite returning from her Bath," "Daughters of the Deep," "Greeks surprised by the Enemy," and so on.

Young Oswald Stoll quickly developed a passion for

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correspondence which has never been wholly extinguished. Taking for guidance the account-books of the earliest Stoll, he shaped ideal programmes for the Parthenon, Liverpool, which he was not able to materialise, for the simple reason that he was offering, "Let us say two pounds ten," to artists meanwhile making twenty times that money. Still, the mistake was on the right side. And during the ten years that ensued, the Parthenon prospered. Mrs Stoll was the bulwark of her son. She is now. It is a pretty tradition of their friendship that whenever he opens a new house Madam settles into the box-office and takes the first money.

One of the last engagements that George Leybourne fulfilled was at the Parthenon, Liverpool. Said Mr Stoll to me a while ago: "I awaited the arrival of my star in terror; but he came not. I went round to his lodgings, and, in a sordid room, found him, huddled up in an arm-chair, half comatose. I shook him, and cried: 'Come, Mr Leybourne! All your friends are waiting for you.' I shall never forget the bitterness of his outburst. 'My friends!' he cried. 'I have no friends! Curse the men who called themselves my friends!' I got him to the hall, and there, again, he just collapsed into an arm-chair. I thought it all hopeless. But when the band played his opening music, he sprang to his feet, a new man, full of life and charm. He sang five songs, and was applauded to the echo. George Leybourne was, to me, the exposition of the word 'personality.' I had seen nothing like it before. I have seen nothing like it since. I suppose I never shall. It was wonderful. To me, in our brief intercourse, he had been disagreeable. But he took his audience in both hands; took it to his heart, charmed and helpless."

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Leaving out of one's consideration the great ballet and revue houses, the London Coliseum is undoubtedly the typical music hall of the world. It is hardly a development of the old-time hall, from which it differs greatly. Whence comes it? Well, Sam Hague's Minstrels were always before the eyes of Oswald Stoll at Liverpool—comic and sentimental song, orchestral music, short dramatic pieces. And at the theatres? Programmes then made up of three, or four, or five dramatic pieces, with songs "between." This may give a clue. But the music hall of Mr Stoll's culture is a veritable cormorant. Each morsel he is able to minister unto his creature is a triumph—circus, country fair, concert platform, theatre, minstrel troupe, they have all paid their tribute.

Then he engrafted on the music hall the "twice nightly" system. It was not his invention. Years ago, the founder of the Barnard family of entrepreneurs, pawnbrokers and hire furniture merchants, had a music hall at Chatham, familiarly known as the "Tin Can." He gave two performances nightly: the first, for the delectation of the "common" soldier, the second for the amusement of the officers, when Tommy was stowed away in barracks. But this is merely a fantastic forefather of the twice nightly system, which, *pace* here and there an experiment, was devised by Mr Stoll to ensure a revenue large enough to meet the vast expenses of a really important music hall, and was probably suggested to him by the old theatrical dodge for replenishing its audience, "Second price at nine."

So, when Oswald Stoll moved on, from the Parthenon, Liverpool, to the Empire, Cardiff, he conceived the idea of linking up a series of halls, with a number of artists

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pecially sealed, giving them permanent employment. The old plan was to keep a popular favourite in one place. There was a comic singer who stayed at the Parthenon, Liverpool, nine months. Nowadays he would be spread over forty halls.

If anyone should encounter Oswald Stoll in the vestibule of a theatre, it is inconceivable that he should ask: "Are you the manager?" for there are none of the marks of that amazing functionary. The silk hat, frock coat, simple cravat, dark trousers, comfortable boots, sparse jewellery, leave you in doubt between a Nonconformist minister and a bank manager. For some occasion, a modified carefulness of attire was impressed upon him. He professed to take the hint, and appeared, still in a frock coat, but, with all the other details of a dazzling lightness!

Eyes of a disconcerting benevolence beam through pince-nez. There is an ominous pause before every sentence, delivered in a carefully subdued voice, which never reaches a high pitch. Twice only has Mr Stoll been heard to swear. His favourite outlet is to pen subtly sarcastic descriptions of unsatisfactory performances, for the film announcements which appear on the Coliseum screen during the intermission. When that weird exposition of "futurist music" a while ago awakened an echo like the roar of a wounded animal from the Coliseum gallery, Mr Stoll noted the case in a few sentences which the enterprising impresario thought were smart *réclame*—because he could not understand English. Those who could, were brought to death's door, by laughter.

Nothing has so impressed me in my knowledge of this man as an experience of his evidence before a Royal Commission on some matter of the stage. He did not understand

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French ; but a knowledge of French plays was important. Within a few hours, he was carefully fed with a précis of each play essential to his evidence, and had learned to recite, with a correct accent, the appropriate extracts.

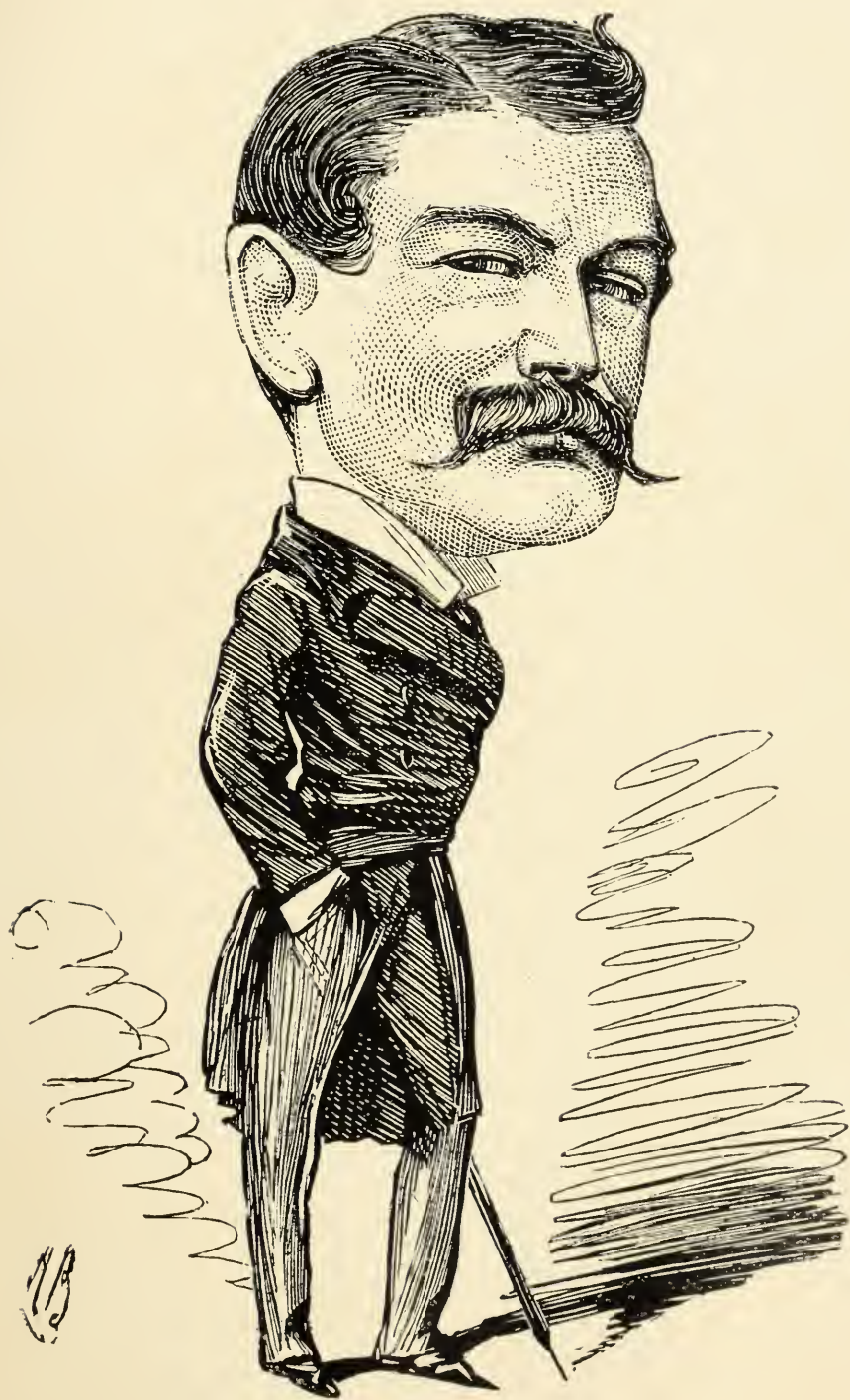
He does not drink ; he does not smoke. His idea of exercise is a drive round Putney Heath ; of violent exercise, a drive round Putney Heath—twice. He has a wonderful library of standard authors ; and an intimate acquaintance with them all. He has enriched literature with two of the most remarkable books that ever came through a stage door—a profound study of Herbert Spencer, and an idealistic essay on high finance. Once he wrote a comic song, called *Mary and John*, which had a tremendous vogue. Nobody outside his family was ever heard to address him by his Christian name. The sentiment with which he inspires his enormous staff is that of “wonder and amaze” at his capacity.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SOCIETY—FIFTY YEARS AGO

The Beginnings of the Bancrofts—Robertson and his Comedies—
Tyranny of Burlesque—The Stage in the Sixties

AS the collection of these pages draws to a close, it will be in order to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the production of *Society* at the Prince of Wales's Theatre—on 11th November 1865. It is not improbable that there are playgoers to-day who never heard of *Society*. There are many, certainly, who never saw a performance of Robertson's comedy. To few will the incidence of its jubilee convey so much as it should. For *Society* sounded the note of a revolution, and established a management that became historic. On 11th November 1865, Marie Wilton and H. J. Byron had been associated in the direction of the Prince of Wales's Theatre just six months. They were not exactly partners, in that Miss Wilton found the money, avowed the responsible management, and indemnified Byron against loss. Their understanding, and their misunderstanding, are fully set forth in *The Bancrofts ; On and Off the Stage*. There was, from the outset, an imperfect sympathy. Briefly, Byron's interest was to write burlesque, for its then most popular exponent. Marie Wilton's ambition was to leave burlesque for the higher plane of comedy. But, in their earlier programmes, burlesque predominated. In *La ! Sonnambula ; or the Supper, the*



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Sleeper, and the Merry Swiss Boy, Miss Wilton was once more the "beamish boy," Alessio. Fanny Josephs played Elvino; Mr Dewar, Rodolpho, "Johnny" Clarke, Amina; Bella Goodall, Lisa; and Harry Cox, "a virtuous peasant (by the kind permission of the legitimate drama)." Bancroft was from the outset a member of the company; and already, he confesses, in love with his manager. He had been on the stage four years, spent mostly in Birmingham and Liverpool. In Birmingham his salary was one pound a week. His manager of those days, Mercer Simpson, has often told me that the young actor endeared himself more by his skill as a fencer than by his promise as an actor; for Simpson was an enthusiastic swordsman, and gladly utilised Bancroft's skill with the foils for morning practice. At another obscure and vanished theatre, W. H. Kendal had just made his first appearance on the stage, playing a small part in *Sweeney Todd* and, with his more distinguished comrade of the Royal, was wont to celebrate their improvement at Saturday night suppers of the homeliest description, in dejected lodgings still to be inspected during my time in Birmingham.

Edgar Pemberton, the acute diarist of the Birmingham stage, is fain to admit that he does not remember Bancroft's work, though he must certainly have seen it. I regret that the question never arose in conversation with another Birmingham connoisseur—a fishmonger, of poor surrounding, who for many years had been King of the Claque, and who frankly rejoiced in his suppression as such. "For," said he, "I can really enjoy a play at last." He was a genuine lover of the stage, and a discerning critic, resentful of the occasions when his professional retainer had meant the perversion of his judgment.

Anyhow, the aristocratic-looking young actor whose work

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at Liverpool commended itself to Marie Wilton had already accumulated a large repertory of minor characters in Shakespeare ; and, notably, such useful parts of the period as Bob Brierley, John Mildmay, Captain Hawkesley and Murphy Maguire. When *Society* was produced Bancroft was entrusted with the part of Sidney Daryl, which in eventual revivals he exchanged for that of Tom Stylus. Shortly after his later triumph in *Caste* he married his director, doubtless in need of such guidance, for the erratic Byron had gone his way.

Everybody was getting on. Marie Bancroft's genius for comedy was universally acclaimed. Tom Robertson's fees, which were one pound a performance for *Society*, had increased to three pounds a performance for *Caste*. And in a statement he drew up about this time for the use of his executor, he scheduled investments exceeding in value five hundred pounds. Authors deal in more heroic figures nowadays.

It is rather more than a hundred years since the Prince of Wales's theatre was built, on the site of a much earlier Concert Room. It ruined its first proprietor, whose wife aspired to act. He was a pawnbroker named Paul, eventually as Blanchard says, with an eloquent inflection of malice, "compelled to raise supplies on the other side of the very counter where he had once been chief dictator." After its apparently essential baptism of bankruptcy, the theatre changed its name a dozen times—the Regency, the West London Theatre, the Queen's (William IV.'s accession suggested this compliment to Queen Adelaide), the Fitzroy, the Queen's, again, are not all the descriptions of the house, which was known as "the Dusthole" when Marie Wilton and her early associates entered into possession, fearful that its

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patrons would molest a party so respectable. None the less, Frédéric Lemaître made his first appearance in England there ; and, for a time, it was managed by Mrs Nisbett, that frail, beautiful creature who married a title, and to whom Planché impudently quoted :

“ If to her share some female errors fall
Look on her face and you'll *believe* them all.”

Tom Robertson, schoolmaster, entertainer, actor, journalist, hack playwright, had done nothing more remarkable for the stage than translate from a French play *David Garrick* for Sothern. He wrote *Society* with Sothern in his eye—to play Sidney Daryl, of course. Sothern liked the play, and the part, and lent the needy dramatist thirty pounds on the security of the manuscript. But Buckstone, then midway through his twenty-five years' tenancy of the Haymarket, promptly dismissed *Society* as “rot.” Every manager in town agreed ; finally, Sefton Parry, to whom the angry dramatist retorted that he was such an utter idiot, his opinion confirmed in its writer an obstinate belief in the merit of *Society*.

When Alexander Henderson at last agreed to try the play, at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, there was a difficulty about Sothern's thirty pounds. Byron, who had introduced *Society* to Henderson, was characteristically unable to find it. And the loan was eventually negotiated in the “Owls' Roost.” The irony of it ! It is hard to imagine that Byron repented of his interest in *Society*, for by all accounts he was an amiable creature ; but he certainly threw the weight of his influence against its production at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. The success of *Society* crowned Miss

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Wilton's belief in her genius for comedy, settled her determination to abandon burlesque, and eventually excluded Byron from the scheme. Burlesque continued in the meanwhile to be a feature of the Prince of Wales's programme. At Christmas, 1865, *Little Don Giovanni* was produced, as a seasonable supplement to *Society*, and John Hare, who had made his first remarkable success as Lord Ptarmigan, had to put on the petticoats of Zerlina ! Clarke was the Leporello, Fanny Josephs the Masetto, Sophie Larkin the Elvino and Miss Hughes the Donna Anna. This was Marie Wilton's last appearance in burlesque, though some time still elapsed ere it was excluded from her programmes altogether.

She records, in her Memoirs, that an amusing feature of *Little Don Giovanni* was the Commandant's horse, which "looked like an exaggerated Lowther Arcade toy." About this time, the dilapidated equestrian statue in Leicester Square was, during a night, painted white and adorned with huge white spots. London laughed in approval—and the cleansing of the foul and disreputable Square began to be seriously considered. Official attempts to discover the perpetrators of the "outrage" were unsuccessful ; though the investigation need not have travelled farther than the Alhambra paint-room. It is interesting to survey the London stage as it was in the autumn of 1865. London mourned the death of two very different, and yet not unsympathetic, celebrities—Palmerston and Tom Sayers. None of the forces that made the modern stage was manifest ; though the Bancrofts have lived to see them spent ! Henry Irving had been to London, but resigned his engagement with Harris at the Princess's, because his part in *Ivy Hall* was insignificant, and returned to the provinces for more years of drudgery.

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Still, it may be that the Lyceum had in Fechter the most interesting manager of the moment. With Charles Dickens for his backer, never heavily taxed, and faithfully repaid, Fechter was for four years, from 1863 to 1867, the director of the Lyceum, *The Duke's Motto*, *Hamlet*, *Belphegor*, *Ravenswood* and *The Corsican Brothers* being among his productions. At the particular moment, he was doing an adaptation from the French, by Palgrave Simpson, called *The Watch Cry*. Fechter was, in fact, the one distinguished director of the earlier Lyceum, other than Madame Vestris. There were several ephemeral managements after his departure, ere Colonel Bateman laid the foundation for Henry Irving.

Gilbert had not yet delivered his attack on salacious and silly *opera bouffe*—for one thing, *opera bouffe* was still unknown. He may claim to have written the first “problem play,” or the first play to which that stupid phrase could, with its present significance, be applied—to wit, *Charity*, which was produced at the Haymarket in 1874, with Mrs Kendal as the central figure of the controversy which raged as to the moral qualities desirable in a stage heroine. But when the star of Robertson arose, Gilbert had not yet made up his mind whether the Bar or fugitive journalism offered the lesser chance of starvation. He had not even written a burlesque for the Gaiety, for that theatre was still unbuilt. That he would revolutionise the musical stage, and die worth £140,000, was beyond his dreams.

It is probable that *Society* had no more formidable rival than *Rip Van Winkle*, in which Jefferson managed a long run, for those times, at the Adelphi. Only the other day, Mrs Adelaide Billington commemorated the fiftieth anniversary

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of her appearance as his Gretchen. At the Princess's, *It's Never Too Late to Mend*, with its aggressively realistic prison episode, induced a "scene"—Vining, the manager, publicly insulted the critics from the stage. But the play endured, and is a profitable undertaking still. It headed the Bancrofts into London; and it saw them out, for by the merest coincidence Harris revived it at Drury Lane a generation later, while they were making their adieux at the Haymarket. Perhaps one may infer that Reade's play is, in its way, as characteristic and as vital a product of the English stage as *Society* itself.

Elsewhere in our survey of the stage in the sixties we are confronted with this curious spectacle: Here and there a perfunctory production of Shakespeare; but mostly adaptations, from the French, not acknowledged—now of sentimental melodrama, now of sexual farce. The only original work of which the English dramatist seemed capable was burlesque, generally with a classical theme, impiously perverted, and decorated with word contortion beyond endurance. There was burlesque everywhere, if only a short burlesque, relieving more serious fare. On the night of the production of *Society* Miss Wilton's old home, the Strand, was closed, for re-decoration and the final rehearsals of *L'Africaine*, a travesty of Meyerbeer's opera by Burnand, in which, on the following Saturday, Ada Swanborough, David James and Thomas Thorne appeared. A few years later, the two men were established in the new Vaudeville and on the way to a vast fortune with *Our Boys*, for which Byron may have found a suggestion in the sentiment and style of his lifelong friend, Tom Robertson. Burnand had another burlesque running, at the Royalty—a revision of the *Dido* which he had written a few years before for the exploitation of Charles Young as

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its heroine, at the St James's Theatre. The legends of Troy seemed to have a particular fascination for him. He used them all over and over again. Here is a characteristic line from *Dido* :

“ Æneas, son of Venus, sails the sea
Mighty and high,
As Venus' son should be;”

A third burlesque from this prolific pen, *Ixion*, originally produced at the Royalty, formed a part of the programme at Astley's, though Adah Isaacs Menken, in *A Child of the Sun*, was doubtless the real attraction. Apropos : in considering the competitors of the Prince of Wales's Theatre in the sixties we have again to remember that the West End was not the close circle it is now. Indeed, the Prince of Wales's itself would have been out of bounds. Miss Marriott, at Sadler's Wells, was employing, in performances of Shakespeare and Sheridan and Sheridan Knowles, a company hardly inferior to that at Drury Lane. Her programme before me includes the inevitable burlesque—*Arrah ! No Brogue !*

From the Haymarket *Brother Sam*, an adaptation, from the German, by way of a change, designed to exploit Sothern in a companion sketch to that of Lord Dundreary, had just been withdrawn in favour of a programme made up of four pieces—Mathews in *Used Up*, *Three Weeks after Marriage*, a ballet and an extravaganza. At the St James's Theatre Miss Herbert had proceeded from a sensational success in *Lady Audley's Secret* to another adaptation from a novel by Miss Braddon by the always available John Oxenford (of *The Times*), *Eleanor's Victory*. Her next important venture was a revival of *The School for Scandal*. At the Olympic, Henry Neville—that gracious and charming gentleman who lately

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died, hardly out of harness, having had the rare wisdom to periodically accommodate his histrionic undertakings, but never his spirit, to his years—was the attraction, with Kate Terry for his *vis-à-vis*, in *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*. The programme was made up with *The Cleft Stick*, a farce adapted from the French (by John Oxenford) and a short burlesque in which Nelly Farren appeared.

At Drury Lane Helen Faucit had completed what was, in effect, her farewell season. Phelps, in the evening of his days, was the central figure of a series of Shakespearean revivals. It was to this adventure that Chatterton referred in a famous letter to *The Times*, which, after his death, his relatives strenuously declared he wrote at the dictation of Boucicault. "Sir" (wrote Chatterton), "I am neither a literary missionary nor a martyr. I am simply the manager of a theatre, a vendor of intellectual entertainment to the London public, and I found that Shakespeare spelled ruin, and Byron bankruptcy"—this by way of an apology for Boucicault's *Formosa*, with its flaming heroine, who attracted all London, but would hardly serve to illumine a prayer meeting nowadays.

There was a liberal selection of music hall and kindred entertainments for the Londoner. The newspapers that contained the preliminary announcements of *Society* contained the prospectus of the Alhambra Limited: Capital, £100,000, the first document of the kind on record. Two ballets, *Les Patineurs* and a floral ballet, and a few "variety" performers, whose names have no significance now; formed the nightly programme. The London Pavilion, just emerging from its "free and easy" stage, made much of Arthur Lloyd and William Lingard. The New Oxford Music Hall had challenged

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the Weston's Royal Music Hall to a trial of strength. The Strand Music Hall, with "Jolly John" Nash for its bright particular star, was at the height of its brief career. In the outlying districts were scores of more or less important music halls. A dozen minstrel troupes fiercely contested the right to be known as the "Original Christy Minstrels."

All the original performers in *Society* at Liverpool are dead. One of them only travelled to London with the piece—ugly, amiable, incomparable Sophie Larkin, the Lady Ptarmigan. Byron, with all his admiration for the play; declared that the critics would fall foul of it, because of the "Owls' Roost." Marie Wilton fought the issue and won. "Better be dangerous than dull," she said. Midway between the Liverpool production and the London production Robertson's wife died. Their happy life had been a troubled one, and Robertson's biographer, Edgar Pemberton, declares that Mrs Robertson's last illness was due to her persistence in earning, on the stage, her share of the expenses of their little home. He says that Robertson sent friends to Astley's one night with orders to hiss her, in the hope of making her hate the theatre; but they came back declaring that she looked so sweet, they could do nothing but applaud! If this be true, I cannot say; but this I can say—to know, and inevitably to love, Edgar Pemberton himself, made it impossible for the most adamant critic to tell him how bad were the plays he most persistently wrote.

Robertson wrote *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, *School* and *M.P.* in rapid succession, and then he died, on the night of the last performance of his unfortunate play, *War*, at the St James's Theatre. It was an injudiciously coloured picture of the Franco-German War, then fiercely in progress. Its failure

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was kept from the dying man—who, however, ingeniously coaxed the story of its first-night reception from his schoolboy son.

But the Robertson comedies—the half-dozen enumerated—changed the atmosphere of the London stage. Robertson's comedies had their critics, kindly and unkindly. They were ridiculed as the “cult of the cup and saucer.” We have learned to find them old-fashioned now ourselves, but never so old-fashioned as when a foolish manager sought to make them modern. When *Society* was produced the modest style of the *mise en scène* was somewhat scornfully noticed. The Bancrofts lived to encounter more stern and definite reproach for setting a new fashion of overloading the stage with furniture, and art impedimenta. That was when they revived *The Rivals* at the Haymarket in 1880, when Pinero made his last appearance on the stage in the capacity of an actor. The success of *The Squire* had, on the one hand, made his work of play-writing more engrossing. But, indeed, his Sir Antony moved no critic to enthusiasm. *The Squire* recalls an angry controversy. Pinero said he “had tried to bring the scent of the hay over the footlights.” Thomas Hardy and his friends declared that the dramatist had, in effect, adapted *Far from the Madding Crowd* to the stage. Pinero produced evidence of his good faith. The Hardy people counter-attacked with an authorised version of the novel, which utterly failed to match Pinero's play in popularity.

It is remarkable that Henry Morley's *Diary of a London Playgoer*, from 1851 to 1866, which, reprinted from *The Examiner*, is the judicial and discerning record of that time, ignores the Wilton-Byron management, and *Society*, in which,

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apparently, the critic saw no fulfilment of his ardent hope for a renaissance of the English drama.

On the site of the Prince of Wales's Theatre now stands the beautiful Scala. It was built, at an immense cost, by Dr Distin Maddick, who professed his desire so to commemorate the happy memories of his playgoing boyhood. Lady Bancroft dissolved to tears as she tried to make an opening speech ; and the ambitious pile is now a moving-picture house ! It once opened to an audience whose contributions to the "treasury" did not nearly amount to a sovereign, the impresario of the moment being one W. H. C. Nation, who lately died, worth nearly half-a-million, and whose amusement, any time this half-century, was to take a West End Theatre for the performance, by decrepit veterans, of his own incomprehensible plays.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE GAIETY AND ITS MANAGERS

The Discovery of Nellie Farren—The Famous Quartette—Edward Terry's Oddities—A Pageant of Dead Drolls—The Real George Edwardes

SO long as George Edwardes lived, the Gaiety was unique amongst London theatres in having had but two permanent managers during nearly fifty years. Another distinction it retains. It is the only theatre which has been faithful to a particular kind of entertainment—and that, actually suggested by the name of the house. There have, of course, been intercalary seasons. But in all probability the traveller returning to London after many years of absence would still find at the Gaiety a musical entertainment, making an appeal to mirth.

None can appreciate the difficulty of finding a name for a new theatre till he is seriously confronted with it. And so, desperation has sometimes driven the impresario to a ridiculous incongruity. The Lyceum had to wait long for Irving; then indeed its style became "curiously felicitous." But who ever saw a vaudeville at the little theatre in the Strand? How seldom has the entertainment at the Lyric or the Apollo been musical? More remarkable has been the ruthless dissipation of almost every tradition clinging to particular houses. Here, once, you would find inevitably Shakespeare, there comic opera, elsewhere characteristic

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comedy. Now, the bewildered country cousin has no certain goal but the Gaiety.

Truly, there has been a ceaseless process of evolution. When John Hollingshead, in 1878, became the tenant of the new house which Mr Lionel Lawson of *The Telegraph* had built on the site of the old Strand Music Hall (and much more ground), his programme formula was very like that of what, years later, we called a triple bill. In little comedies and musical pieces the most distinguished actors and actresses of the day appeared. The earliest burlesques were of no more than an hour's duration, a fact which seems to be overlooked by many modern writers on the subject. It was not until Christmas, 1880, that the first three-act burlesque was produced, *The Forty Thieves*. Hollingshead's curious apology was his desire to work out a "story."

In one of the recently published obituaries of George Edwardes he was described as the inventor of musical comedy, as a pioneer of burlesque and as the discoverer of Nellie Farren—statements which follow the three degrees of comparison in inaccuracy. Nellie Farren, born of a most remarkable stage family—it can cite four generations, or five—and trained at the East End, was not even Hollingshead's "discovery." If anyone could claim the distinction it was Horace Wigan. But 'tis a foolish word, anyhow. Genius will out.

Nellie Farren was a member of Hollingshead's company from the outset. Doubtless he did appreciate and encourage her peculiar facility in burlesque. Nellie Farren's earliest *vis-à-vis* was Joe Eldred, an excellent comedian, who was introduced to theatrical life by that philandering priest and passionate elocutionist, the Reverend J. C. M. Bellew,

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Eldred played Micawber in private life even more remarkably than on the stage. With very little trouble he could produce an extraordinary likeness to Disraeli, of whom he used to give an impersonation, with an effective speech, at benefits. Once, during a contested election in the country, he mischievously performed this feat on the balcony of a hotel.

For a long time, in succession to Eldred, Toole was the Gaiety comedian. The "famous quartette" was not formed until 1876—when *Little Don Cæsar* was produced, Terry playing the King of Spain. The programme on this occasion included a farce by Robert Soutar, Nellie Farren's journalist-actor husband, for many years the Gaiety stage manager, and a "farcical drama" by H. J. Byron, *The Bull by the Horns*. Already the superior person was attacking the Gaiety, and Hollingshead, nothing loath, entered into a furious controversy at this juncture with *The Times* critic, though he had not yet invented that immortal phrase, "the sacred lamp of burlesque." This first appeared in his Christmas advertisements in 1880.

Terry was the greatest actor in burlesque I ever saw. He had had a long training in Shakespeare, under Irving's preceptor, Charles Calvert, before he came to the Strand, whence Hollingshead stole him. His whimsical face, his air of melancholy, his unexpected vocal inflections, all helped. But Terry had the secret of burlesque—he treated it *au grand sérieux*.

He was the one member of the Gaiety company who kept aloof from its enervating amusements. A penurious creature, he saved all he could from his hundred-a-week salary, and made money out of the vacation tour of the

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provinces, which was specially permitted to him, with the use of the Gaiety material, in his contract. He promptly seceded when it appeared that the Hollingshead management was making for disaster. Terry found an expression of his more generous side in Freemasonry, in the practice of which he was of the religious-fanatic order—it engaged his thoughts, his time, his money. He could have filled a museum with his regalia. Next, he loved parochial and magisterial responsibilities. When he settled into Barnes he had a curious greeting. “Be you Terry the actor?” said a doddering veteran—the sexton. Terry delightedly admitted his identity. “Oi buried Drinkwater Meadows,” cried the old man, shaking with laughter as he walked away.

My last curious encounter with Terry was at the Central Criminal Court, on a Grand Jury. I promptly proposed him for chairman, and I suppose he never spent two happier days. Terry was always the *laudator temporis acte* when burlesque was mentioned. But his attempt to revive it, with Kate Vaughan, in *King Kodak*, at his own theatre, was a terrible experience, and a remarkable proof of George Edwardes’s wisdom in rejecting every tradition of the Gaiety which he saw had really lost its force. In this he differed entirely from Arthur Collins who, when he became manager of Drury Lane, was perfectly superstitious in the care with which he retained every important member of the “old governor’s” staff.

Kate Vaughan, whom Hollingshead took from the music halls, had already gone her way. Royce was in Australia. He is home again, and acting, in his vigorous seventies. Edwardes was joyously free from the “old gang” when he came into control of the Gaiety. He kept the invaluable

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Meyer Lutz, but readily quarrelled with the veteran, at the psychological moment. And he was unfeignedly glad when the most wonderful testimonial ever organised by the public relieved him of a terrible anxiety on account of the hopelessly stricken favourite, Nellie Farren.

Hollingshead always explained the collapse of his management by the fact that a long illness left him with shattered nerves, which he brought to a premature resumption of business. "Six months' holiday and I would still have been Practical John," said he. I wonder if he was ever Practical John! Anyway, he resorted to this impossible partner and the other, and the troubles of the famous old theatre were like to become a scandal. George Edwardes, who had done a little touring management, in Ireland and elsewhere, as an alternative to cramming for the army, thereafter, settling into London as acting manager for D'Oyly Carte, with whom he had family ties, became Hollingshead's partner. But the two men were never in sympathy, and Hollingshead soon went his way, leaving a rather important legacy, *Little Jack Sheppard*, which he commissioned and cast. Several failures had possibly aroused him to a supreme effort, for *Little Jack Sheppard* was handed over to his successor in good order and proved extremely popular. The book was by "Pot" Stephens, for many years an effective member of *The Daily Telegraph* staff, and "Bill" Yardley, who was so (eventually) unfortunate as to score the first "century" in a university cricket match. It helped to divert him from the Bar, and made of him a thriftless Bohemian—dramatic critic of *The Sporting Times*, as "Bill of the Play," writer of burlesques and farces that rarely succeeded, but dear, good fellow always.

Friday afternoon used to see an inroad of *The Sporting*

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Times staff to Romano's bar, with such balances of salary as had remained due after the mid-weekly inroads ; and in their pockets proof slips, much in demand, of their salacious stories ere John Corlett's discreet blue pencil had ruinously gone through. Pot Stephens tried to establish a combined rival to *The Era* and to *The Sporting Times* as *The Topical Times*, but it had a troubled career and is no more ; neither is Pot Stephens, nor, while we are recalling the brave days of *The Sporting Times*, are Corlett, Shirley Brooks, Willie Goldberg, Arthur Binstead, Edward Spencer, Cecil Raleigh, and James Davis. Corlett alone just lived to see the fiftieth anniversary of the sturdy child he had adopted.

Here is a story characteristic of all its parties. Yardley had some rights in a play, which George Edwardes wanted. Unwilling, always, to do an unpleasant thing he could delegate, Edwardes entrusted the mission to the eager and dependable Arthur Cohen, who hailed me from a hansom. "Have you seen Bill Yardley ? I've been driving about all day with a hundred pounds for him." Soon I encountered Yardley. He knew all about the hundred pounds, and had spent the day hiding in strange bars lest he should meet Cohen and be tempted by hunger to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage.

At the outset I spoke of the Gaiety as unique, in one respect or two. It is unique in this also : no theatre in the world has such a complement of grey ghosts. To the public it appeals as the supreme expression of the "light side" of the stage. Its favourite performers have won and held the affection of the playgoer as none others have even come near winning it. Within its walls—taking the two Gaieties in continuity—there have been amazing outbursts of emotion.

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What a grim companion picture one could draw ; what a pageant of dead drolls one could conjure up—not of those earlier histrions, or of the later Arthur Williams, who died in the fulness of time. The Gaiety has seen such tragedies ! One of the earliest acquisitions of the new management was George Stone, who began life in a booth, and was, when he came into his own, acclaimed a comedian of rare unction and humour. Typhoid, got in an unsanitary dressing-room, bore him off in his prime. I especially remember his Valentine, in *Faust*. The Mephistopheles was Edward Lonnen, another booth-graduate—another early victim, in this case of consumption, which a life less strenuous than that of a Gaiety favourite might have combated. The Marguerite was Florence St John, whose first singing master dismissed her because she sang “like a bird,” and needed no tuition. Her heart was golden, too. Poor, lovable, incorrigible Jack ! She contrived to crowd four unhappy marriages into a life that otherwise had been much longer. To support her first sickly husband she sang in the streets. She was a star in grand opera—in Durand’s provincial company, which probably suggested the greater enterprise of Carl Rosa—before she took to *opera bouffe* and burlesque. It is certain that she loved Marius deeply, and she broke into passionate weeping when she appreciated the sordid charges he brought against her in that memorable divorce case.

I knew both the parties to the fourth marriage well enough to suggest that it might prove disastrous. And so it did. “How true were your words ” is my last remembered speech of a sweet woman and a brilliant artist, then, in the face of painful illness, beginning a new chapter in her career, as a

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comedian, for the wonderful voice had lost its certainty. Death, maybe, was kind. Think again, of Kate Vaughan, buried in a strange land; of pretty little Katie Seymour, and Katie James.

Lonnen's successor as Mephisto was Edmund Payne, destined to be associated with George Edwardes till the active business life of the manager ended—though the actor fell ill and died, while the manager still lingered. Payne, too, was a country lad, of humble origin, but when he got to London his comical appearance as the call boy in *In Town*, and the suggestion of humour that may have been in him, kept him a favourite for twelve years. Few men prospered so greatly with so little effort and so little acquired skill. A lisp, a few steps of dancing, a Peck's-bad-boy grin and five feet nothing were his stock in trade. Once an accident to his knee kept him an invalid for months. He had a most productive benefit; bulletins were issued, as it might be of a royal personage, and the Gaiety was packed to the doors to welcome him back. A thrill of horror pervaded the audience when the poor little man, overdoing his antics, in his excitement broke his knee again, and was again consigned to a sick-bed from which it seemed he would never rise. It is probable his vitality was thereafter impaired. For he was a careful and domesticated creature.

It is safe to say that no actress, for thirty years from the seventies, was so beloved as Nellie Farren. "The boys welcome their Nellie" was the inscription on an immense panel of linen which, too full for words, they hung from the gallery when she returned from a long absence abroad. This sentence epitomised a volume of theatrical history. No less a sum than seven thousand pounds was raised by a benefit

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performance when her need was made known, and Nellie Farren's funeral had the dimensions of a royal function, though a long and painful illness, tenderly watched, had prepared her admirers for her death.

Probably the sudden death of Fred Leslie made the deeper impression on the popular imagination. He was a comparatively new favourite, a youngster from the city, whom Hollingshead engaged for *Little Jack Sheppard*, on the strength of his success in *Rip Van Winkle*. What Leslie would have become—who shall speculate? His *Rip* suggested one thing. His visit to America sent him home a premature Seymour Hicks, restless, fantastically inventive, full of strange tricks. His career was short, but he managed to accumulate sixteen thousand pounds.

When George Edwardes died the pens of "One Who Knew Him" and the delineator of "The Real George Edwardes" were busy. But I am afraid neither revealed the man, nor could do so. Edwardes's tremendous asset was his nationality. He had the engaging manner, the charming ingenuousness, the deadly skill in persuasion, which are the priceless inheritance of some Irishmen. And, while he had, of course, moments of intense emotion, he could repress it. Rutland Barrington tells of an encounter between Edwardes and an actor, a very old friend, in the Strand. Edwardes acknowledged the other's greeting, chatted pleasantly of early days, professed delight at the meeting, and said: "Come along and see me one day. I'd like to find something for you at the Gaiety." "But I've been there these three years!" said the other. One is asked, I suppose, to receive this as a characteristic instance of absent-mindedness. It was probably a pose, of many possibilities. No keener man of

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business than Edwardes existed. He perpetrated the wildest extravagances, but deliberately, and with ulterior motives. He was ridiculously generous, in salaries and in presents, to some of the actresses in his employment—it was his way of avoiding argument and disturbance. But, all things being equal, the Gaiety bargains were hard bargains, and contracts needed to be carefully considered, even referred to experienced advisers. Edwardes had a way of making appointments for business conferences at strange hours. Find him lolling on a settee, at midnight, with a pipe in his mouth as a relief to his habitual cigar, tired, after a day's racing—and he was at his deadliest. Nothing so impressed his business methods as the style of the men whom, in succession, he had for his confidential advisers. Dead is Michael Levenston; dead is Arthur Cohen. When the new Gaiety was built there were three deep niches for statuary in the wall of the first story. Who can recall Charles Brookfield's awful jest? I won't, here.

Edwardes had a style of dress that would have looked strange on a less handsome, well-groomed, engaging man—a lounge suit and a silk hat, almost invariably. He had, like Hollingshead, a high-pitched voice, with a plaintive note. He entertained largely at the Savoy and Romano's, and keenly appreciated the "best boy" in the economy of the Gaiety. He was an inveterate gambler, now rich, now poor—never so poor as at the moment of producing *The Merry Widow*—on horses, in stocks and at the all-night card-table, which was his greatest delight. To the public he stood for a heroic development of popular entertainment. "George Edwardes is dead; musical comedy is dead—*Quorum magna pars fuit.*" It is all true, and yet Edwardes had no

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inventiveness, no initiative and no sparkle of personal wit. "No ! No ! I don't like that at all. Try something else " was his constant cry at rehearsal—stimulant but not inspiring. But he had an exquisite charm of personality. The pathos of his last years, a war prisoner in Austria, touched every heart, and I doubt if there was a dry eye in the church of the Jesuit Fathers, Farm Street, when the last services of the Church were performed. His death removed the most engaging figure in modern management.

CHAPTER XXXV

MY OLD ALBUM

Three Famous Clowns—The Queen's Jester—An Interesting Interview—
Eccentricities of Celebrities—Mrs Weldon and Gounod

IF ever Fate should enforce the surrender of my ragged regiment of books, the last to march must be an old album. It was full before the spirit of modern art possessed photography. It has a moustached Henry Irving, Ellen Terry in a crinoline, Lottie Venne in an Early Victorian "pork pie," Mrs Langtry with something like a chignon, and a strange structure called, I think, a pannier. There is a blank page, from which the perennial Prince Paragon tore a hated record of her teens. She is forgiven; but no more is that sacred volume entrusted to fingers that would unkindly touch the face of Time.

For a frontispiece stands the memorial of my first romance—Minnie Warren, who reached town in the company of General Tom Thumb. Madam Thumb, a little larger than her man, played propriety. Minnie sordidly sold her pictures, at the price of a shilling, but if one could lay his hand upon his heart and declare that his years were fewer than ten, she added a kiss. Tom Thumb died—others filched his name, but the original Tom Thumb passed away in 1890. Minnie Warren still lives. She married some modern correspondent to Count Borulaski, and, as a Countess, not so long since revisited London. We talked of old days,

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but all her politeness could not hide the truth. She had forgotten !

I see the picture of an immense, benevolent-looking negro, rudely inscribed Macomo. It brings back to memory a travelling wild beast show, long since absorbed by the Bostock family, I believe—that of Manders. Macomo was a sailor, who volunteered at Greenwich Fair, and for years enjoyed great fame as the Lion King. I hate performances with animals, and never unwillingly witnessed one that I did not seek forgiveness from the great brown eyes of a most understanding bull-dog. But show folk, who often have this feeling too, when you get to their hearts, make a few exceptions of trainers, and declare that Macomo had a deep love of the brutes, who certainly responded to him as I have never seen wild beasts respond. Time after time one read in the newspapers that he had come to the end that was universally predicted for him. But he died a natural death.

“W. F. Wallet, the Queen's Jester, in his seventy-second year” is written in a firm hand across the portrait of a handsome old man, in the conventional costume of his kind. An unwarranted assumption of a long extinct title, as you can easily assure yourself, on reference to the erudite Dr Doran's record of “Court Fools.” But Wallet had appeared before Queen Victoria and her young people on several occasions, and a royal smile was easily construed into a royal sanction ! *Wallet's Memoirs* are the only important record we have, from within, of circus life. He was the son of a Nottingham tradesman, and, when he had made his mark, returned to his old home to marry into the well-known musical family of Farmer—John Farmer, the Harrow professor, was his brother-in-law. Another was Henry Farmer, writer of the

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unforgettable *First Love* waltz. Wallet, were he to be revived, would probably be an incomparable *compère* of *revue* to-day. As it was, he delivered addresses full of quaint philosophy, pleasant jocularities and Shakespearean tags. He travelled the world over and made and lost fortunes—a formal, gracious, entertaining old man, who made one turn instinctively to a well-known essay of Lamb, for his counterpart.

Three most sedate old gentlemen look like physicians in consultation. They are the famous clowns of my generation—Harry Bolen, whom I never saw, Harry Payne and Watty Hildyard. The last was incomparably the finer. Payne became a clown by accident. He was a mimic and dancer, and was figuring as a bear in a Covent Garden pantomime when Flexmore, the great clown of the day, fell ill. “Stand by, young Payne; I don’t think Flexmore’s long for this world,” said the manager. And surely enough, Payne had to skip out of his bearskin one night, into the motley. He was clown thereafter in some fifty pantomimes—a large, prosperous-looking man, who lived in a dull house at Camden Town, and went to the city twice a week for a report on his investments.

Watty Hildyard could go back to the pantomime with an “opening,” when the comedian of a dramatic plot was mysteriously changed into the clown. Throughout the long run of an Adelphi pantomime he nightly, under these conditions, went up a “trap” as Toole went down, but never met his *alter ego*. Watty Hildyard recalled a Covent Garden pantomime to which Queen Victoria brought Prince Albert Edward and the Princess Victoria, and soundly smacked her son and heir for snatching the opera glasses

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from his sister ! Pleasantry and humour exuded from the little man, who inherited a small fortune from a religious aunt, with the condition that he left the stage and changed his name. So he spent a peaceful old age at Greenwich, concealing his identity from new neighbours and old friends. "You won't give me away ?" he said to me one night, after he had tenderly displayed his old dress over a cup of tea. But he stole away to Drury Lane from year to year, and talked old times with Payne.

Here is a picture of Toole as Caleb Plummer. His first Tilly Slowboy, it is interesting to recall, was Nellie Farren, and his first Dot, Carlotta Addison, as sweet in her old age as she could have been in her girlhood. Across the corner he has sprawled : "I like to get as near nature as I can for fourpence." Toole was an old man when I got to know him personally. He cherished a love of young society—the boys of his company had to do escort duty when he took his daily walk of the provincial cities, on tour. He sedulously lived up to his reputation for practical joking, feeling that a quip and a crank was expected of him. I love to remember that occasion on which he was hoist with his own petard. He gave a garden-party, for which he made careful preparation by tying bunches of grapes to holly bushes, peaches to yew-trees, and so on. When many strange folk were found mingling with his guests, it proved that two distinguished actors had stationed themselves at the outer gate and tempted all passers-by to come in and see the show. I have, I suppose, the last picture taken of Toole, by Ralph Lumley, the dramatist. The background is Mrs John Wood's garden, at Birchington—Lumley married her daughter and some-while successor at Drury Lane. I recall Mrs Wood for a

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passionate protest against "interviewing." She declared the modern habit of taking the public behind the scenes to be degrading, and solemnly prophesied that the public would cordially hate the theatre, when its last vestige of illusion had gone.

Apropos interviewing : to a portrait of Cecil Rhodes I have appended a memorial of a journalistic failure. One wintry morning in 1892 I went out from Plymouth on the mail tug to intercept the great man on his way to London. The steamer should stay a quarter of an hour. I presented the credential of a great London daily. "So," said Rhodes, "you've come all the way from London to make me talk ? And I have come all the way from South Africa to keep my mouth shut."

Toole left a vast fortune—nearly eighty thousand pounds—and a wonderful will. In its multitude of bequests it was a diary of his friendships—the fluctuation of which was recorded in innumerable codicils and corrections. Henry Neville left a similar, and to his executors even more troublesome, document. Here is Neville, in the nineties—finely fixed, with a touch of old fashion in his frock coat and his cravat, his hair permitting a cherished Brutus still. He had a tricky pose, three-quarter front, which conveyed the idea, in a picture, or in a big stage situation, that he was nearly an inch taller than actually was the case. Neville was terribly sensitive on the point of his age. As we turned away from Pettitt's grave together, he remarked, of the inscription on the coffin : "The truth at last ! In the same hour, you shall know it of me, dear friend, but not before." I suppose he was still early in the seventies.

Portraits of Sims and Pettitt are side by side—Sims, in a

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smart frock coat, with a delicate waist, a polished silk hat, button-hole and cane, quite the hero of his own *Crutch and Toothpick*. Pettitt carefully measured the print, and a day or two later stuck in a photograph carefully a little larger.

A group from *Dearer than Life* at the Queen's Theatre is interesting—Irrving, Toole, Wyndham, Ada Dyas, John Clayton and Henrietta Hodson. But still more interesting from its inscription: "I picked this up in the Walworth Road and thought you would like to have it.—LENO." The little comedian developed that ducal style of signature. He was an ardent lover of the serious theatre and was a regular visitor to the Lyceum. He had a passion for making up in Irrving's characters and having photographs taken. Charles I. and Richard III. figure among my treasures.

Early one Monday morning Pettitt and I terminated a late sitting at Henry Neville's hospitable fireside, to find Pettitt's brougham axle deep in snow, the driver inside, very drunk. We mounted the box and started Londonwards, Pettitt driving. Near Chalk Farm he ran into a post. From the interior of the brougham came an angry oath. "My ——, what a coachman." At Drury Lane next night I was telling the story in Harris's convivial corner of the saloon. Charles Warner entered and overheard. "Pettitt," said he, "convulsed the Green Room Club with that story at dinner to-night—but, with *you* as the driver."

To a photograph of Irrving I have attached a note in his handwriting, which summarises the diplomacy and sweetness of the man. It was induced by the first notice of an important production, with which I was entrusted as a budding critic. Addressed to the writer came an instant letter: "I thank you for your gracious words.—HENRY IRVING."

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A carefully dishevelled creature, with hair and beard streaming at full length, loose collar and cravat, is Henry Arthur Jones, now, like Sir Arthur Pinero, sedulously trimmed ; then, just bridging the abyss between commerce and the stage, and dressing the part of the dreamy dramatist. One night, in the Green Room Club, he adventured some strong opinions on play-writing, which angered Pot Stephens, who, with no more than a poor opera book or two to his name, turned on the stranger, ridiculed his appearance and his views, and asked him how he dare hold forth in such company ! Poor Pot was silenced long ago, but Mr Jones, as the parliamentary reporters say, is "left speaking."

Here is Mrs Weldon, that mad, benevolent and beneficent creature. I know little of her tragedy, something of her eccentricity, much of her good heart. The picture is inscribed : "To H. G. Hibbert. B.P.P.I.," and proceeds to explain that the ring on her little finger was the gift of Gounod, with whom she had quarrelled bitterly. Her exclusion from the Birmingham Festival, where she meant to expound him, settled the right of a theatrical manager to absolute discretion in the sale of tickets. But Madam Georgina got her own back when *Mors et Vita* was done, at the Royal Albert Hall, for the delectation of the Queen. It was greatly desired that the composer should conduct. An appeal to Mrs Weldon brought this reply : "I am more than astonished at your impudence. I have this morning returned from Paris, where I have successfully set everything in motion to obtain an exequatur of my verdict against Mr Gounod. If he attempts to set his foot in England as matters now stand, I shall immediately have him arrested."

I asked the meaning of "B.P.P.I.," and got a letter in

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Madam's singularly neat and legible writing: "Ignoramus! Get a cheap edition of Cobbett, who called journalists (God forgive him) the Best possible public instructors."

Once I showed my old album to a distinguished actor. I saw him conning with interest the picture of a beautiful woman, always unknown to me, and eagerly asked if he could identify the dame. "My first wife, damn her," was the quick response.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE ROMANCE OF THE CINEMA

Its Introduction to London—A Protégé of the Music Hall—Millions Made, and Lost—Its Wondrous Future

OF all the children to whom the music hall has been foster mother, none was so rapid in its growth, so wayward, so fruitful in surprise as the cinematograph. And, after twenty years of remarkable achievement, it is still, in the belief of them that know it best, but on the threshold of its greatness. "The British public," said one recorder of its early exhibition, "has a new toy, of which it is not likely to tire quickly"; just as an American writer of the first importance had been interested, but found the cinematograph "a curiosity of no particular importance." A toy; a curiosity!

Moving pictures, it is still necessary to explain to the technically unlearned, do not move. This illusion was produced by the earliest scientific toy-makers. All the early photographers strenuously endeavoured to capture impressions of movement. Edison casually gave to the world a contrivance known as the kinetoscope, which he did not effectually protect. And from that many inventors toiled simultaneously to develop what we know as the cinematograph.

To the imagination of the Londoner, Robert W. Paul made the first and the most prolonged appeal. He was a craftsman

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of delicate and ingenious scientific instruments, and, having made a greater, or at any rate a more important contribution to the development of the cinematograph in England than any other, having taught many men of more heroic enterprise, or better luck, how to become millionaires, he retired from the field and returned contentedly to his first calling.

Paul illustrates the romance of invention with a homely picture. When, in the small hours of one morning, his experimental pictures were first endowed with life, in his Hatton Garden workshop, his men uttered a great shout of victory, the police were alarmed and broke in. As a sedative, an impromptu exhibition was administered to them. And so, in the winter of 1895, the cinematograph came to London. In a few weeks it was brought to the notice of Augustus Harris, and, frankly regarding it as an entertainment novelty of an ephemeral quality, he tried a cinema side-show at Olympia, where it competed with Richardson's show and kindred delights.

Meanwhile Lumière, a Parisian photographer, had arrived at similar results, from a manipulation of the kinetoscope. Trewey, the juggler, and exponent of comic expression with the aid of a flexible felt hat, brought the Lumière apparatus to London, and was certainly ahead of Paul in impressing the cinematograph on the great mass of pleasure-seekers. The music hall agents and music hall managers were incredulous. Trewey resorted to the home of the scientific toy—the Polytechnic, and was looked upon as having achieved the finality of his mission. But he persisted. He arranged an afternoon season at the Empire, in the early days of March 1896. He soon insinuated the cinematograph

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to the evening programme here. And the reign of the moving picture began. I remember asking Trewey what he believed to be its possibilities in expeditiousness. He declared that if the progress of improvement were maintained a day would come when an occurrence might be reproduced on the screen within forty-eight hours. Whether or not my old friend lived to see his estimate corrected to minutes, I know not. Paul was in immediate succession. Toward the end of March, 1896, his so-called Animatograph was established at the Alhambra, where a tentative engagement, for weeks, was extended to one of years' duration. Indeed, I do not believe that either of the two great Leicester Square houses has been without some form of animated photograph in all the meantime. Soon a finer apparatus than that either of Paul or of Lumière arrived at the Palace—known as the American Biograph, which for many months drew all London. Its pictures were larger, steadier, more actual. Before the end of 1896 there was not a music hall without its equipment of animated photography. Its scientific, industrial, commercial, and above all its tremendous art possibilities, were not yet conceived—or perceived. Let me, as merely of the ministry of popular entertainment, emphasise this fact. The greatest, or at any rate the most appellent, scientific invention of our time, was nurtured in the English music hall, just as the electric light was first exploited as the advertisement of a theatre. A third Londoner completed the group of the pioneers of animated photography—a young American salesman of apparatus, Charles Urban, to whom the higher development of the new invention—its use for illustrating travel, the wonders of nature, and of scientific investigation—has

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always appealed, more than its use for frivolous amusement—on occasion, debased amusement. And two young Frenchmen, the Brothers Pathé, who began life as the exhibitors of a gramophone at Paris, quickly built up an immense business for the manufacture and sale of apparatus and films.

Imagination recoils from an attempt to suggest the magnitude of the cinematograph to-day. Estimate England's inexplicably small share, then multiply it many times, and begin the endeavour to appreciate the fact that the cinematograph represents the third largest industry of America, where millionaires operate in its finance as they do in public loans, in railways, mines and steel; where great theatrical managers, dramatists and actors have silenced its menace by alliance, where they think nothing of an expenditure equalling ten thousand pounds on a production, and where they maintain upwards of six hundred picture theatres in a single city, Chicago.

Is English enterprise to follow in the wake of this huge enterprise? There are, at any rate, points of remarkable likeness in the evolution of the cinematograph here. First of all, the fact is to be noted that the pioneers of the industry, in both countries, nearly all retired—a few of them enriched, some of them disappointed and disaffected, some of them utterly broken. There never was a business of such strange mutations. It has been called by one of its most important adherents, Fred Martin—one of my boys, when he first of all aspired to journalism—who is mainly responsible for the manipulation of the exclusive picture and the introduction of the five-reel or "full performance" film here, in preference to a programme of many items, "The Topsy Turvy Industry."

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One of its wealthiest men to-day was a travelling showman. But the experience of the travelling showmen as a community was very different. To a man they abandoned their waxworks and their freaks and their marionettes for the cinematograph. I recall a St Giles's Fair at Oxford—that historic function still retained, but I think then lost, its boyish fascination for me—when, of fifty-one booths, forty-nine enclosed crude cinematograph shows, mostly exploiting vulgar comedy. The travelling showman came next to the music hall in popularising the cinematograph as an entertainment and in supporting it as a manufacturing industry. But he was hoist with his own petard. His success stimulated local enterprise, and when he revisited an old pitch he found a permanent picture theatre established.

Ruin spread among the travelling showmen and a new era in the history of the cinematograph began. Not the Klon-dyke attracted such a ragged swarm of adventurers. The collapse of the skating rink fever had left numerous sites and building shells free. Wild-cat speculators attracted millions of money from ignorant speculators, always fascinated by the business of pleasure. You could count picture palaces by the score in a brief ride across London. Again a debacle; and the official liquidator busy. But out of the wreck a new, resplendent picture palace—the ideal picture palace—is slowly rising. Its architects have expended to one hundred thousand pounds in outlay on a structure.

For the short, amusing picture play there will always be a particular market. Elemental amusement will never lose its charm and importance—not till the love of toys is dead in small children and great. But the cinematograph has left the nursery, and—still with uncertain eyes—is surveying the

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world. It has fascinated nearly every great actor, nearly every great author of our time, and liberally rewarded their adhesion to its cause. It is forming its own schools of financiers, and artists, and mechanics, formerly drawn from everywhere and anywhere. The millionaires of the moving picture world include a clothing salesman, an itinerant conjurer and a music hall "lightning cartoonist." The redoubtable Charlie Chaplin, now drawing his weekly emolument in thousands of dollars, was a "Lancashire clog dancer." The greatest producer of the day, D. W. Griffith, who begins his cash account with a retaining fee of four hundred pounds a week, was but a few years ago a desperate actor. Mr Frederick A. Talbot, the historian of the cinema, estimated that four million people visit picture palaces daily in Great Britain. They pay fifteen million pounds out of their pockets annually into the box-offices of the cinema halls, and one person out of every three hundred and fifty one passes in the street depends upon the pictures for a livelihood. Of what individual investment may mean Mr R. G. Knowles is an example. He has outlaid twenty-five thousand pounds on the material of his travel lectures, and his wife, once Miss Winifred Johnson, abandoned the musical career she so adorned to become his secretary, editress, librarian.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MEDITATIONS AMONG THE TOMBS

A Fleet Street Graveyard—Fortunes sunk in Newspapers—Popular Fiction and its Purveyors—Comic Journalism—The Halfpenny Press—The Sunday Dinner of Demos

WAR has innumerable victims that reach no roll of honour—which is only my important introduction to the remark that upwards of fifty periodical publications have quietly slipped away during the past eighteen months. The good rule that one should “always verify citations” has induced a few fascinated hours spent with the Press Directory, not indeed to gaze with a layman’s wonder on the vastness and variety of journalistic enterprise, but to authenticate some milestones, to scrape the moss from here and there a memorial, and to ponder a little on the infinite mutations of popular taste in ephemeral literature.

It is conceivable that many of the newspaper proprietors who bowed to the pressure of the war accepted their fate gladly. For the percentage of newspapers that show a handsome profit is very small; of newspapers that just pay, modest in its proportions; and of newspapers that steadily deplete the banking accounts of their infatuated owners, immense. Millions must have sunk in the wreckage of journalism. As I write, an historic newspaper is in the market once more. It has steadily lost twelve thousand

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pounds a year these many years. I wonder if it has ever paid.

One's survey may include another kind of popular publication. I have spoken of Henry Morley in his capacity of a dramatic critic. He was a person of various erudition and immense industry. His range extended to the most remarkable book ever accumulated about a form of amusement that most folk account vulgar—the Memorials of Bartholomew Fair, with its merry-andrews and its monsters. We owe him, indirectly, an enterprise that may rank with a university, "Everyman's Library"; for the finely selected and concisely annotated series of classics which he issued as "Morley's Universal Library" through the chief apostle of cheap literature, Routledge, thirty years ago, made accessible, for pence, books which even the catholicity of "Bohn's Library" had not included, for as many shillings. But I recall an earlier library than Morley's, with its many successors. Does the "Cottage Library" still exist, I wonder. What joyous feasts were encased in those gaudily bound, much-gilded little volumes, issued by some firm in the north. The "best seller" was a delectable story of humble domesticity called *The Basket of Flowers*. But it included many more considerable works.

I cannot remember a time when I did not read with facility, nor when I did not enjoy the unguided freedom of a huge library. But it did not prevent an occasional surfeit of mud pies! My first administration of literary criticism was thundered from an evangelical pulpit by a now venerable Dean, whose utter want of sympathy with exuberant youth—worse, with every aspiration to culture, soured my boyhood; and whom I lately encountered in the Strand with a

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spasm of painful memory—a very effigy of Calvin in gaiters. The curiously assorted subjects of his denunciation were William Black's *Daughter of Heth*, admittedly judged from its scriptural title, but otherwise unread; and a random threepenn'orth from a newsvendor (so are some sermons written), to wit, *The Boys of England*, *The Young Men of Great Britain*, and *The Sons of Britannia*, publications which enjoyed an immense sale forty years ago, and from whose pages emerged heroes to be separately honoured by the publication of their particular adventures in weekly numbers, as *Jack Harkaway's School Days*, *Jack Harkaway at Oxford*, *Jack Harkaway Afloat*. Jack had a rival in *Tom Wildrake*. And both had a stalwart assailant, more effective than my Dean, in dear old George Henty, who poured out wholesome fiction for youngsters in prodigious quantities; but also found time for much conviviality at the Savage Club. One George Emmett was the prosperous proprietor of many curious publications for boys. He was a great collector of armour, and a persistent first nighter at the old Lyceum, where he once got to blows with Joseph Hatton about a disputed stall.

My hunger for fiction in due course engorged *The London Journal*, *The London Reader* and *Bow Bells*—all gone, too. Will I ever know a pleasure equal to that of reading the interminable—but who ever wanted to reach its end?—*Stanfield Hall*! The writer was a much-esteemed and mild-mannered man named Smith. Stanfield Hall, in Norfolk, was one of the oldest manor houses in England. It owed its greatest fame to the murder of its several residents by James Bloomfield Rush, whose order for dinner, shortly before his execution, was, “Pig to-day, with plenty of plum sauce.”

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In days to come I learned the secret of such authorship. The pay of the publishers was small, but so dependable ! The novelist would dump down a weekly instalment of manuscript on a dirty counter, and wait while the cashier took from a hook the galley proof of the previous week's work, measure it by the yard, and withdraw the proper payment from the till ! Somewhat more sedate was the estimable and still flourishing *Family Herald*, whose proprietor, William Stevens, laid down a code of rules for his writers, strictly enforced. One was that no child should be born out of wedlock in its pages, and the approach of even a legitimate addition to the family had to be hinted at in a set phrase of scrupulous delicacy. *The Family Herald* began those delightfully confidential and sympathetic Answers to Correspondents on which a hundred papers thrive to-day ; while the leading articles of its long-time editor, Hain Friswell, were models of gentle philosophy.

To counteract such "pernicious literature"—I am still quoting my Dean—worthy people started *The Leisure Hour* and *Good Words*. I seek them now in vain in my Press Directory. And what has become of *The Argosy*, without which no middle-class home was happy, following with a passionate eagerness the adventures of one Johnny Ludlow, a kind of Victorian Cayley Drummle, invented by the editress, Mrs Henry Wood. Miss Braddon had her rival publication, *Belgravia*, gone, as *Temple Bar* is, and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and *London Society*—whose last editor, James Hogg, was the dearest old man that ever added an apology to the three half-crowns with which he paid for a set of verses. A few years ago there was a regular debacle in magazines of this type—*Household Words*, *Home Chimes*, *Once a Week*, among them.

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But the mortality in comic papers is awful. I have spoken of *Fun*. A natural sequence to the establishment of *Punch* was the arrival of *Judy*, in whose pages that curious person, "Ally Sloper," first appeared. In time he had his own organ, *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday*; and *Judy* languished for lack of him. Some time since I saw a speculative account as to the origin of Sloper. This I believe to be the true one: Charles H. Ross edited *Judy*. Marie Duval drew for it. Ernest Warren, who died ere the fulfilment of his great promise as a dramatist, wrote for it. The staff was one of those affectionate fraternities that the old editors seemed better able to manage than the new. Warren, intimately known as Uncle Inkpen, had been badly scarred by illness in Jamaica, and Marie Duval loved to draw strange pictures of him. That was the suggestion of Sloper, which W. G. Baxter, a clever artist from Manchester, developed into the long-familiar monster. Sloper became an obsession of Baxter, and ruined his career, as Manchester men who remember his fine earlier Dickens studies agree. *Funny Folks* was for years a good property, but is no more. *Moonshine* might surely have lived on John Proctor's cartoons, but it flickered out. *Ariel* served, at any rate, to establish Zangruell as a humorist. And *Pick-Me-Up* exploited some of the best work of Phil May and Dudley Hardy. But the avowedly comic paper seems to begin and end in *Punch*. I suppose I have forgotten a score. But I remember a cold-blooded effort at a comic monthly—H. J. Byron's short-lived *Mirth*.

Society papers without number have vainly sought, during my time, to emulate the success of *Truth* and *The World*—of the old *World*. There have been, in something like that order, *Vanity Fair*, *The Whitehall Review*, *Pan* (edited by the

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versatile Alfred Thompson and enclosing a novel by Sala), an earlier *Sketch*, edited by Reginald Shirley Brooks, *Orange Blossoms*, with which Phil Robinson was sure he could make a fortune by specialising on society weddings, *The Court and Society Review*, *The St Stephen's Review*, which was at one time of immense assistance to the Conservative party, with impudent adaptations of Hogarth's cartoons, *Society*, which missed a fortune by juggling its price between a penny and sixpence, *The Bat*, *The Hawk*, *The Period*, *The Planet* and so on. Two costly attempts were made to compete with the then unassailable *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*, with *The Pictorial World* and *Black and White*.

But the more tremendous tragedies are those of the daily press, which may be taken to include Sunday papers. It is an open secret that *The Evening News*, one of the most prosperous newspapers of to-day, ate up capital to be reckoned in hundreds of thousands ere the Harmsworths bought it for a song, and emerged from snippety to serious journalism. The true story of that deal, engineered by an ambitious Birmingham reporter who became a millionaire, Kennedy Jones, will never be written, but it was destined to revolutionise the English Press—almost, English society.

It is an odd thing that Newnes, whose romantic success with *Tit-Bits* and *The Strand Magazine* staked the course for the Harmsworths, never got a firm grip of daily journalism—his *Courier* and also his *Million* stand for two of the historic defeats of a really great general in journalism. Nor did Pearson, who followed boldly in the track of the Newnes and Harmsworth weekly and monthly periodicals, succeed remarkably in daily and evening journalism. Stead's descent on Fleet Street with *The Daily Paper* proved

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again, in a few hours, the limitations of his extraordinary personality.

For years the halfpenny paper really appealing to the popular imagination was *The Echo*, started by the publishing firm of Cassell, soon tired of a strange and potentially ruinous business. They sold it to Baron Grant, the company promoter who swept Leicester Square and garnished it with Shakespeare and geraniums. He made fortunes and lost fortunes; and, in his troubled old age, found a curious pleasure in collecting prospectuses, as some men of less genius collect postage stamps. That weird creature, Passmore Edwards, must eventually have made millions out of *The Echo*, a vast proportion of which he dissipated in philanthropy—for choice public libraries and missionary “settlements” during his lifetime. The economies of *The Echo* office were sordid and disheartening. But Edwards had the genius of journalism—compression, conciseness, variety and a touch of culture were the characteristics of *The Echo*. Its eccentric proprietor was a (theoretical) teetotaler, a non-smoker, a food reformer, a dress reformer, what not. He would hand an applicant for work pen and paper and try his quality then and there. He quaintly called this “cheese tasting.” He sold a share in *The Echo* to a group of millionaires for nearly a hundred thousand pounds, repurchased it, and sold it again. Without him, the paper languished and died. Its recent resuscitation and death after a few issues was a grim joke.

One of Edwards's other newspaper properties made for the haven of amalgamation—*The Weekly Times and Echo*, with its strange hotch-potch of high morality, wholemeal bread and horrid Answers to Correspondents on medical cases. Its

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distinction in its last days was that it still retained as its dramatic critic Isaac Seaman, the doyen of the craft, whose pride is in journalism, and who is kept virile at eighty by the joyousness of his disposition and the fervour of his friendships.

England, as the title of a Tory Democratic weekly, was an inspiration of Ashmead Bartlett. But its life and death may be epitomised in an incident. Lord Salisbury delivered a speech of importance at Sheffield, to which the local *Telegraph* gave many columns, recording in three words the fact that "Mr Ashmead Bartlett also spoke." *England* gave the Prime Minister a few lines, and proceeded to a verbatim report of its well-meaning but curiously egotistical editor. It was when the Conservative Party, eager to capture the Sunday leisure of *Demos*, turned in impatience from Ashmead Bartlett and *England* to *The People* that the latter flourished; and the former made for the graveyard which suggested the heading of this chapter. My personal bereavement was greatest when *The Sun*, thanks to a mismanaged action for libel, passed from the control of my many years' brilliant chieftain. Two more recent enterprises merely concern me to bring one's memories of journalistic vicissitude up to date, *The Tribune* and *The Evening Times*.

APPENDIX

ALHAMBRA CHRONOLOGY

Opened as the Panopticon, 16th March 1854.

Opened as the Alhambra by E. T. Smith, 7th February 1858.

Howe's and Cushing's American Circus Season (continued by Walleth), 1858-1859.

Opened as a music hall by E. T. Smith, 13th December 1860.

William Wilde's tenancy, 1861-1864

Leotard's first appearance in England, Whit Monday, 26th May 1861.

Franconi's circus season continued by Loisset, 1863-1864.

Reopened, after rebuilding, by Frederick Strange, 26th December 1864.

Floated as a Limited Liability Company by Frederick Strange, November 1865.

Dancing licence refused, 13th October 1870.

Opened as a theatre, 25th April 1871.

Le Roi Carotte, 3rd June 1872.

Black Crook, 23rd December 1872.

La Belle Helene, 16th August 1873.

Don Juan (extravaganza by H. J. Byron), 22nd December 1873 ;
therewith, the ballet, *Flick and Flock*.

La Jolie Parfumeuse, 18th May 1874.

The Demon's Bride, 7th September 1874.

Whittington, 26th December 1874.

Chilperic, 10th May 1875.

Cupid in Arcadia, 26th June 1875.

The Flower Queen, 8th November 1875.

Spectresheim, 14th August 1875.

Lord Bateman, 24th December 1875.

Le Voyage dans la Lune, 15th April 1876.

Don Quixote, 25th September 1876.

Die Fledermaus, 18th December 1876.

APPENDIX

The Fairies' Home, Christmas, 1876.
Yolande, 18th August 1877.
King Indigo, 24th September 1877.
Orphée aux Enfers, 30th April 1877.
La Fille de Madame Angot, 12th November 1877.
Wildfire, 26th December 1877.
The Grand Duchess, 8th April 1878.
The Golden Wreath, 20th May 1878.
Fatinitza, 20th June 1878.
Genevieve de Brabant, 16th September 1878.
La Perichole, 9th November 1878.
La Poule aux Œufs d'Or, 23rd December 1878.
Venise, 5th May 1879.
The Princess of Trebizonde, 2nd August 1879.
La Petite Mademoiselle, 6th October 1879.
Carmen, 20th October 1879.
Rothomago, 22nd December 1879.
La Fille du Tambour Major, 19th April 1880.
Mefistofele II., 20th December 1880.
Hawaya, 27th December 1880.
Jeanne, Jeannette, Jeanneton, 28th March 1881.
The Bronze Horse, 4th July 1881.
Babil and Bijou, 8th April 1882.
The Black Crook, 3rd December 1881.
The Merry War, 16th October 1882.
Destroyed by fire, 7th December 1882.
The Golden Ring (reopening), 3rd December 1883.
The Beggar Student, 12th April 1884.
Reopened as a music hall, 18th October 1884.
The Swans, 31st November 1884.
Melusine, 22nd December 1884.
Nina, 5th October 1885.
Le Bivouac, 21st December 1885.
Cupid, 24th May 1886.
Dresdina, 15th November 1886.
The Seasons, 20th December 1886.
Nadia, 16th May 1887.

APPENDIX

Algeria, 11th July 1887.
Enchantment, 24th December 1887.
Antiope, 4th June 1888.
Ideala, 3rd September 1888.
Irene, 19th December 1888.
Army and Navy, 1st April 1889.
Astrea, 8th July 1889.
Asmodeus, 23rd December 1889.
Salandra, 23rd June 1890.
The Sleeping Beauty, 15th December 1890.
Orietta, 15th June 1891.
Temptation, 21st December 1891.
On the Ice, 22nd February 1892.
Don Juan, 13th June 1892.
Up the River, 19th September 1892.
Aladdin, 19th December 1892.
Chicago, 27th March 1893.
Fidelia, 19th June 1893.
Don Quixote, 11th December 1893.
The Revolt of the Daughters, 30th March 1894.
Sita, 25th June 1894.
Ali Baba, 29th October 1894.
Titania, 30th July 1895.
Lochinvar, 7th October 1895.
Bluebeard, 16th December 1895.
Donnybrook, 4th June 1896.
Rip van Winkle, 29th July 1896.
Tzigane, 15th December 1896.
Victoria and Merry England, 25th May 1897.
Beauty and the Beast, 4th January 1898.
Jack Ashore, 8th August 1898.
The Red Shoes, 30th January 1899.
A Day Off, 24th April 1899.
Napoli, 21st August 1899.
Soldiers of the Queen, 11th December 1899.
The Handy Man, 24th September 1900.
The Gay City, 19th December 1900.

APPENDIX

Inspiration, 8th June 1901.
Gretna Green, 10th October 1901.
Santa Claus, 25th December 1901.
In Japan, 21st April 1902.
Britannia's Realm, 16th January 1902.
The Devil's Forge, 12th January 1903.
Carmen, 7th May 1903.
All the Year Round, 21st January 1904.
Entente Cordiale, 29th August 1904.
My Lady Nicotine, 27th March 1905.
Parisiana, 11th December 1905.
L'Amour, 11th June 1906.
The Queen of Spades, 25th February 1907.
Les Cloches de Corneville, 7th October 1907.
Cupid Wins, 27th January 1908.
The Two Flags, 25th May 1908.
Paquita, 12th October 1908.
On the Square, 22nd February 1908.
Psyche, 5th April 1909.
On the Heath, 20th September 1909.
Femina, 30th May 1910.
The Dance Dream, 29th May 1911.
1830, 19th October 1911.
Carmen, 24th January 1912.

EMPIRE CHRONOLOGY

Opened as a theatre with a revival of *Chilperic*, 17th April 1884.
Season of Gaiety burlesque, 1884.
Polly revived ; with the ballet *Coppelia*.
Pocahontas, 26th December 1884 (with the ballet *Giselle*).
The Lady of the Locket, 11th March 1885.
Billee Taylor, revived, 21st December 1885.
Hurley Burley (military pantomime), 21st December 1885.
Round the World, 3rd March 1886.
The Palace of Pearl, 12th June 1886.

APPENDIX

A Maiden Wife, 24th August 1886.

Opened as a music hall, 22nd December 1887. Ballets : *The Sports of England*, *Dilara*.

Rose d'Amour (ballet), 19th May 1888.

Diana (ballet), 31st October 1888.

Robert Macaire, 24th December 1888.

The Bal Masque ("A Duel in the Snow"), 28th January 1889.

Cleopatra (ballet), 20th May 1889.

The Paris Exhibition (ballet), 30th September 1889.

The Dream of Wealth (ballet), 23rd December 1889.

Cecile (ballet), 20th May 1890.

Dolly (ballet), 22nd December 1890.

Orfeo (ballet), 25th May 1891.

By the Sea (ballet), 31st August 1891.

Nisita (ballet), 22nd December 1891.

Versailles (ballet), 30th May 1892.

Round the Town (ballet), 26th September 1892.

Katrina (ballet), 20th February 1893.

The Girl I Left Behind Me (ballet), 27th September 1893.

Living pictures first shown, 5th February 1894.

British Pluck Tableau, 23rd April 1894.

La Frolique (ballet), 21st May 1894.

On Brighton Pier (ballet), 8th October 1894.

Closed, as a protest against the County Council restrictions, Saturday, 27th October, to Friday, 2nd November, 1894, inclusive.

Faust (ballet), 6th May 1895.

La Danse (ballet), 25th January 1896.

Lumière's cinematograph introduced, 9th March 1896.

Monte Cristo (ballet), 26th October 1896.

Under One Flag (ballet), 21st June 1897.

The Race, 7th February 1898.

The Press (ballet), 14th February 1898.

Our River (ballet), 22nd September 1898.

Alaska (ballet) 12th October 1898.

Round the Town Again (ballet), 8th May 1899.

Ordered to the Front, 21st November 1899.

Seaside (ballet), 10th September 1900.

APPENDIX

- Les Papillons* (ballet), 18th March 1901.
Old China (ballet), 6th November 1901.
Sousa's band matinees, November to December, 1901.
Our Crown, 28th May 1902.
Gala performance before the Shah of Persia, 19th August 1902.
Milliner Duchess (ballet), 14th January 1903.
Vineland (ballet), 26th September 1903.
High Jinks (ballet), 19th March 1904.
The Dancing Doll, 3rd January 1905.
Genée commanded to appear before the King and Queen at
Chatsworth, 5th January 1905.
The Bugler, 9th October 1905.
Cinderella, 6th January 1906.
Coppelia, 14th May 1906.
Fête Galante, 6th August 1906.
The Debutante, 15th November 1906.
Sir Roger de Coverley, 7th May 1907.
The Belle of the Ball, 30th September 1907.
Coppelia, revived, 10th June 1908.
The Dryad, 7th September 1908.
A Day in Paris, 19th October 1908.
Robert the Devil, 5th July 1909.
Round the World, 9th October 1909.
The same, revived as *East and West*, 21st March 1910.
The Dancing Master, 25th July 1910.
The Faun, 3rd October 1910.
Ship Ahoy, 15th November 1910.
Sylvia, 18th May 1911.
New York, 10th October 1911.
The Water Nymph, 2nd April 1912.
First Love, 24th September 1912.
The Reaper's Dream, 11th February 1913.
Titania, 4th October 1913.
The Dancing Master, 23rd October 1914.
Europe, 7th September 1914.

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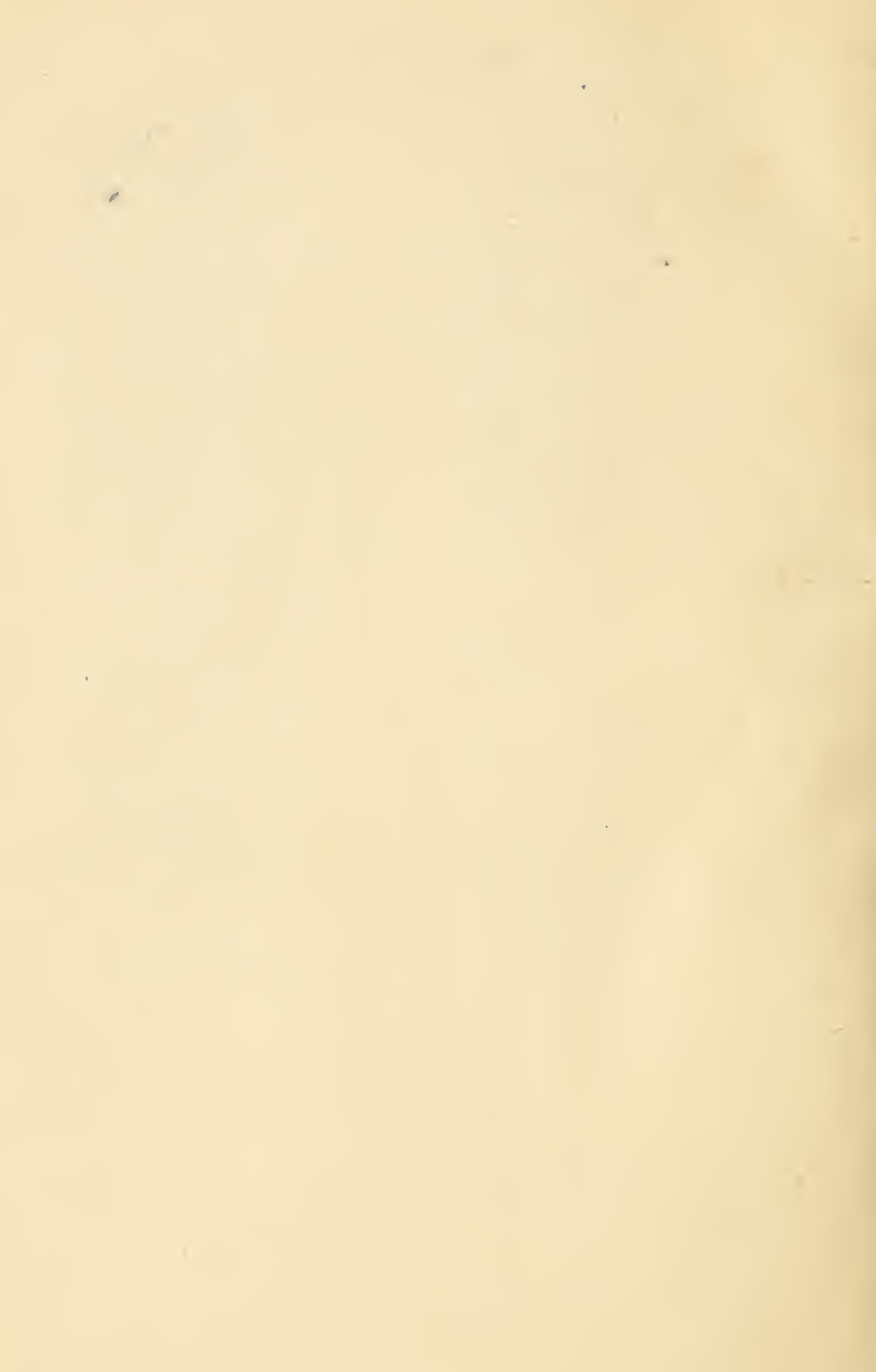
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